FULL COLOUR THROUGHOUT

MIDDLE EAST@WAR No.51

LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

VOLUME 3: MOVING TO WAR, 4–7 JUNE 1982

Tom Cooper & Efim Sandler

MIDDLE EAST@WAR SERIES

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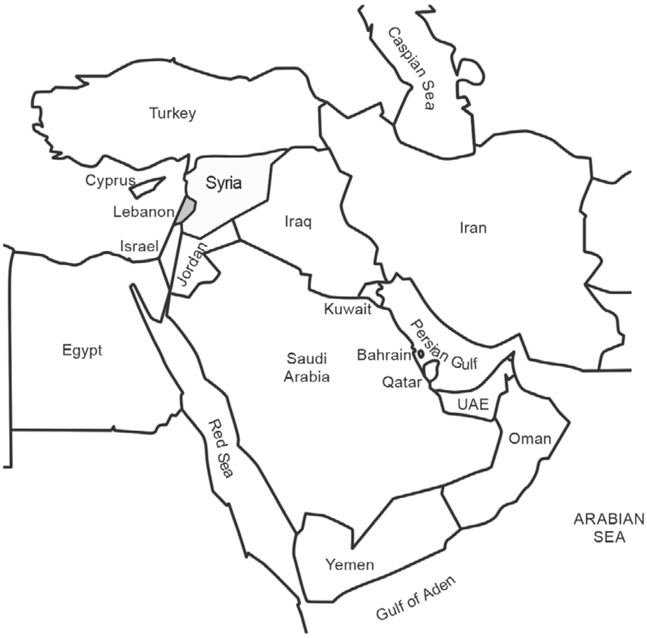

NOTE

In order to simplify the use of this book, all names, locations and geographic designations are as provided in *The Times World Atlas*, or other traditionally accepted major sources of reference, as of the time of the described events. Similarly, Arabic names are Romanised and transcripted rather than transliterated. For example: the definite article al- before words starting with 'sun letters' is given as pronounced instead of simply as al- (which is the usual practice for non-Arabic speakers in most English-language literature and media). All the ranges and measurements cited in this book are provided in both metric and imperial measurements.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Arab Deterrence Force
AMAN	*Agaf HaModi'in* (Israeli military intelligence service)
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
ASCC	Air Standardisation Coordinating Committee
ATGM	Antitank Guided Missile
CASEVAC	Casualty evacuation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CO	commanding officer
FLLF	Front for the Liberation of Lebanon from Foreigners
FAL	*Forces Armées Libanaises* (Lebanese Armed Forces)
HQ	Headquarters
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
IDF/AF	Israeli Defence Force/Air Force
IED	improvised explosive device
INS	Israeli Navy Ship
KFR	Kataeb Regulatory Force
LCP	Lebanese Communist Party
LNM	Lebanese National Movement (also *Mouvement National Libanais*, MNL)
MANPAD	man-portable air defence (system)
MBT	Main Battle Tank
MiG	Mikoyan i Gurevich (the design bureau led by Artyom Ivanovich Mikoyan and Mikhail Iosifovich Gurevich, also known as OKB-155 or MMZ 'Zenit')
MRLS	multiple rocket launcher system
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Palestinians)
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (Palestinians)
PLA	Palestinian Liberation Army (Palestinians)
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation (Palestinians)
RPG	*Ruchnoy Protivotankoviy Granatomyot* (Hand-held antitank grenade launcher)
SAD	Defence Companies (Syria, predecessor to the Republican Guards Division)
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SSNP	Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (Lebanon)
SyAA	Syrian Arab Army
SyAADF	Syrian Arab Air Defence Force
SyAAF	Syrian Arab Air Force
UAV	unmanned/uninhabited aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (also 'Soviet Union')

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Volumes 1 and 2 of this mini-series have served as an introduction to one of the most controversial, dramatic and most tragic civil wars of the late twentieth century. They have provided a comprehensive insight into the millennia, centuries, decades and years that led to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War and the forces involved. By comparison, Volume 3 covers a period of only a few months and fighting of exactly four days: indeed, the first two 'official' days of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon of June 1982.

As in the first two volumes, while preparing this one we have paid special attention to the many resulting clashes: those between the Israelis and the Palestinian forces in Lebanon, but also between the Israelis, the Lebanese, and Syrian forces. While doing that, we have paid special attention to clarifying the political and military aims of all of the involved parties, as much as the operational patterns of their armed forces, their weaponry and their tactics. The result is not only an in-depth and objective study, but one as complete at the strategic, operational and tactical levels as possible, and one with a very unusual flow and style of narrative: one in which no party is right or wrong, none single-handedly wins every clash, and none is doomed to lose every single engagement.

While our research began at the time of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, it has really developed only in recent years, and thanks to the availability of the internet, which has enabled us to establish and maintain links with numerous participants and veterans of the Lebanese Civil War, and with other researchers and well-positioned contacts in the Middle East and elsewhere. For their support in this project, we would like to thank to Albert Grandolini from France for providing much information and an extensive selection from his collection of photographs; Vatche Mitilian, Cesar Jachan, and Issam Bteddini from Lebanon for sharing from their extensive research on the Lebanese armed forces; Alon Ben Moshi from Israel for help with the book; Ali Tobchi from Iraq for sharing details from his own documentation and helping with translations from Arabic; Yosi Elmakis from Israel for help with precious recollections and photographs; Jamal Itani from Lebanon for help with crucial information and photographs; Nour Bardai from Egypt for helping in similar fashion; Jean-Marie Langeron from France and Tomislav Mesaric from Croatia for their immense help with detailed studies of US- and Soviet-made combat aircraft; Jeroen Nijmeijer for details of Soviet aircraft exports to the Middle East; Martin Smisek from Slovakia for sharing precious details on the Syrian armed forces; Pit Weinert from Germany for help with additional information and photographs; and Hicham Honeini from Lebanon for his help with translations of various publications in Arabic. Last but not least, Dr David Nicolle from Great Britain has been a source of encouragement and inspiration for this work over several decades and has always been helpful with further information and photographs.

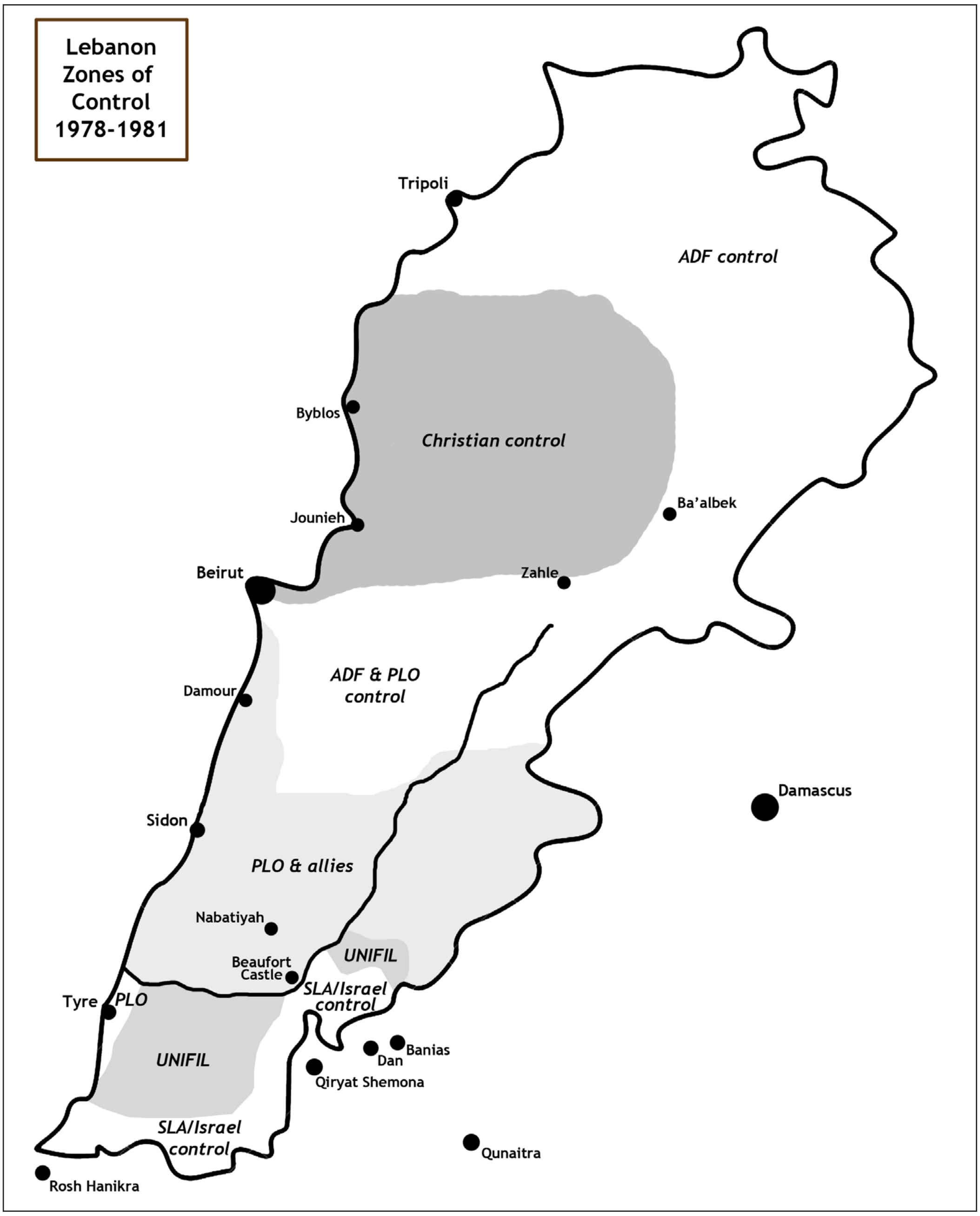
1

COUNTDOWN TO WAR

If it took millennia of near-continuous conflict to set up the background and context for the war that erupted within the borders of Lebanon in 1975, events progressed rapidly through 1981, and even more so through early 1982. Lebanon had ceased to exist as a sovereign country years ago, disintegrating into dozens of enclaves controlled either by local and Palestinian militias, or by foreign powers. For easier understanding, and as usual in this mini-series, the opening chapter provides a brief overview of the situation and the most important warring factions.[1]

LEBANONISATION[2]

Created through unilateral action by the French Mandate authorities in 1920, Lebanon took less than half a century to prove to be a failed state. The principal reason for this was that the French imposed the Maronite Christian elites in a position of domination over a multi-sectarian country with a majority Muslim population. Of course, this is a massive oversimplification, for none of the three major religious groups represented a monolithic bloc: there existed numerous other differences amongst the country's 18 recognised religious groups and even more ethnic groups, and matters were not helped by the fact that no census was held after 1935. Assessments from the 1970s usually estimated the population of Lebanon at around 2–2.5 million, with Muslims making up between 55 and 61 percent of this number, and Christians between 29 and 35 percent. However, describing the Lebanese population as split into only these two religious groups would be another oversimplification. There were (and there remain) significant differences between different sects of the major religions of Lebanon. Between 23 and 29 percent of the Lebanese are Shi'a Muslims, and between 25 and 29 percent are Sunni Muslims. Traditionally, the majority of the Shi'a lived in southern Lebanon, West Beirut and the Beka'a Valley, while the Sunnis lived in West Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon. The Shi'a were generally kept away from positions of power, while Sunni notables held the state together, but could not serve in any positions higher than that of the prime minister. On the contrary, while accounting for 26–30 percent of the population, Maronite Christians were granted all the dominant positions in the economy and politics: the presidency was (and remains) reserved for a Maronite Christian. Another 9 percent of the Lebanese were Eastern Orthodox Christians, while Melkite Catholics comprised up to 6 percent, while another 5 percent comprised Protestants, Roman Catholics, and followers of the Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, and Assyrian branches of Christianity. The majority of the Lebanese Christians populated Greater Beirut, northern Lebanon and the Mount Lebanon area. Last but not least, the Druze were usually assessed as constituting about 5 percent of the population, primarily in the rural, mountainous areas of Mount Lebanon and the Shouf Mountains.



A map of Lebanon in 1978–1981, showing the approximate extent of enclaves controlled by the principal parties involved. (Map by Tom Cooper)

Nominally, no Lebanese citizens were Palestinians, although between 1947 and 1969 up to 400,000 Palestinian Muslims and Christians – ethnically cleansed by Israel from Palestine – settled down in the country. While many had left by the late 1960s, their number increased again after Palestinian militant organisations were evicted from Jordan during the so-called Black September of 1970. The mass of Palestinians lived in 12 refugee camps, mainly between southern Beirut and Tyre and Beaufort Castle in the south.

The Palestinian presence and struggle for rights resulted in continuous confrontations with both Israel and various Lebanese factions. After driving the Palestinians away from Palestine, early on, during the 1970s, Israel sought to drive them ever further away from its borders and, when this failed to provide results, began openly destabilising Lebanon with the aim of turning the local population against the Palestinians. However, the longer the Israeli–Palestinian conflict went on, and the closer Lebanese Christians cooperated with Israelis, the more Lebanese Muslims sided with the Palestinians. That all said, it should always be kept in mind that almost every one of Lebanon's ethno-religious groups experienced its own, internal differences over politics, some of which created deep rifts along ideological lines; and that between 600,000 and 900,000 Lebanese left their homeland between 1976 and the 1990s, resulting in a situation where nowadays more people of Lebanese origin live abroad than in their homeland. Their influence upon developments in the Lebanese Civil War remains almost as under-studied as the influence of most of the foreign powers that became involved.

With the authority of the central government in Beirut all but collapsing once the civil war erupted, due to several Israeli and Syrian military interventions, and due to the influence – including financial support – from several other foreign powers, by 1981 the Lebanese Civil War was a multi-party inter-ethnic conflict, pitting not only Maronite Christians against Palestinians, but Christians against Christians, Muslims against Muslims, and Israelis against Syrians and other Lebanese parties – and to say that the aims of all the parties were mutually exclusive would be a massive understatement. Maronite Christians insisted on retaining their position of dominance and on expulsion of the Palestinians and several Muslim factions; the Palestinians sough to use Lebanon as a base for guerrilla war against Israel and also to create a para-state within Lebanon; the Syrians sought to establish their control over the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the government in Beirut and the Lebanese economy; major Lebanese left-wing and Muslim factions opposed the Christian domination and the Israeli involvement, while Israel sought to create an alliance of united Christian forces, drive the Palestinians out of Lebanon, and to prevent the establishment of what it saw as a 'puppet Syrian regime'. Atop of all of this, all the involved parties also fought to stuff the pockets of their leaders with profit from all imaginable sorts of malversations. By insisting upon the supposed 'existential threat' posed by the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and the 'Soviet penetration of the Middle East', Israel safeguarded lavish economic- and military aid from the USA. By 'opposing left-wing terror', Christians secured extensive aid from right-wing circles in Western Europe. In turn, the 'anti-Zionist' and 'anti-Imperialist' struggle of the Palestinians secured them the support of oil-wealthy, conservative Arab governments and from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR; colloquially 'Soviet Union'). Moreover, all the parties became involved neck-deep in organised crime, foremost hashish production and the smuggling of narcotics, trafficking of arms, alcohol, supplies and stolen goods. Atop of all of this, every single party insisted on being the only legitimate authority and the only one with 'good' and 'right' intentions.

OVERTURE

As described in Volumes 1 and 2, throughout early 1981, Lebanon was the scene of some of the worst violence since the outbreak of the civil war six years earlier. Most of the north, east, and the centre of the country were under the control of the Arab Deterrence Force (ADF). Established by the Arab League in late 1976 with the aim of serving as a peacekeeping body, the centrepiece of the 25,000-strong ADF was a contingent of the Syrian Arab Army (SyAA): headquartered in Chtoura, in the Beka'a Valley, and commanded by Major General Samy al-Khatib. This included the 35th and 41st Special Forces Brigades, the 47th and 62nd Mechanised Infantry Brigades, 51st Independent Armoured Brigade, and the 67th Independent Brigade. Initially, the ADF was reasonably effective. Although greatly limited in strength and authority, the ADF managed to stabilise the situation and reactivate the Lebanese economy in this part of the country and convinced the PLO to withdraw its forces 15km from the border with Israel. However, it proved unable to prevent continuous clashes between the Lebanese Maronite Christians and Palestinians and could neither prevent the continuously intensifying tumult in southern Lebanon, nor stop regular raids against PLO bases conducted by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), and actually stood in the way of the self-imposed leader of the Maronite Christians, Bashir Gemayel.

Originally in command of the Kataeb Party's militia, the Kataeb Regulatory Force (KFR, colloquially the 'Kataeb' or 'Phalange'), Bashir Gemayel established himself in control of the Christian forces in the course of a surprise attack on the competition on 7 July 1980, which became known as the 'Day of the Long Knives', or the 'Safra Massacre'. Headquartered in Jounieh, by 1981, his combatants controlled the coast from East Beirut to Byblos, and a sizeable portion of northern central Lebanon.

At the time the ADF was created, the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Hafez al-Assad, was an ally of the Lebanese Christians, and opposed the PLO. Insistent on establishing himself as the champion of Arab rights and the sole force standing in the way of what he saw as a 'Zionist walkover' of the entire Middle East, Assad considered Syria a nation to which – historically – all of Arab Palestine and all of Lebanon belonged. Certainly enough, he was opportune enough to have practical aims too: the mass of Syrian exports and imports were conducted via Lebanese ports, he was interested in controlling the local economy, and he had a strategic interest in keeping Israel out of the country. Correspondingly, Assad was searching for ways to subject to his control (or to destroy) all the factions involved in the civil war. However, because Syria lacked the necessary economic and military might, and his regime was facing a growing insurgency at home, Assad was in a position sensible to pressure from the USSR, the government of which was pursuing its own agendas. Correspondingly, he was forced into an alliance with the PLO – which in turn placed him at odds with the Maronite Christians. This played straight into Gemayel's hands: now allied with Israel and striving to become the president of Lebanon, since early 1978, his Phalange began fighting the Syrians.

At least as much – if not even more – of the violence in Lebanon in 1981 was driven by political activity in Israel ahead of elections in June of that year. Concerned he might lose, Prime Minister Menachem Begin of the Likud Party was exploiting every opportunity to rally supporters around him through running high-profile strikes at Palestinian militant groups, and the Muslim population of southern Lebanon. Encouraged by the Chief-of-Staff of the IDF, General Rafael Eitan, Begin regularly ordered commando raids and air strikes against selected targets in the country. Ironically,

A soldier and a truck of the Syrian Arab Army in West Beirut, seen during clashes between the Amal and the Lebanese Communist Party militias in January 1982. (Jamal Itani Collection)

this was playing straight into the hands of Gemayel, who was keen to provoke an Israeli military intervention in the country. In February 1981, the leader of the Phalange thus instigated the Battle of Zahle by infiltrating his combatants into a town controlled by the Syrian contingent of the ADF. Although causing painful losses to the SyAA, the Phalange was eventually overpowered and forced to withdraw. While avoiding getting dragged into Gemayel's strife with Assad, and limiting his support for the KFR to deliveries of arms and ammunition, on 9 April 1981, Begin ordered the IDF into another large-scale raid – Operation Night Prayer – on PLO bases around the village of Dayr el-Zahrani. Determined not to be outdone, Assad reacted on 26 April 1981 by ordering Mikoyan i Gurevich MiG-23MS interceptors of the Syrian Arab Air Force (SyAAF) to intercept a formation of McDonnell Douglas A-4 Skyhawk fighter-bombers of the Israeli Defence Force/Air Force (IDF/AF) underway south of Lebanon. According to Damascus, the Syrians shot down one Israeli jet without loss in return; according to Tel Aviv, nothing happened at all. However, two days later General Eitan ordered the IDF/AF to intercept Mil Mi-8 helicopters of the SyAAF used to support Syrian troops in the Zahle area. Carried out by a pair of recently delivered, US-made, General Dynamics F-16A fighter-bombers, this action resulted in the downing of two Mil Mi-8 helicopters, and the death of their crews and passengers.

As a former fighter-pilot of the SyAAF, Assad was perfectly aware of his service's technological inferiority vis-à-vis the IDF/AF. Therefore, he ordered the deployment of an air defence brigade of the Syrian Arab Air Defence Force (SyAADF) equipped with radar-homing surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) into Lebanon. Initially including three battalions (or 'SAM sites') equipped with 2K12 Kub (ASCC/NATO codename 'SA-6 Gainful'), and one with S-75 (ASCC/NATO codename 'SA-2 Guideline') this took-up positions in the Beka'a Valley, with the purpose of providing protection for the SyAA's contingent of the ADF. Officially concerned for the IDF/AF's freedom of operation inside Lebanese airspace, but actually in the middle of an election campaign, Begin happily exploited the opportunity to publicly threaten the destruction of the missiles, and then embroiled his country in a spiral of entirely unnecessary, outright counterproductive provocations, resulting in the so-called 'Missile Crisis': a 20-day-long exchange of threats and counterthreats, and lots of old-fashioned 'sabre rattling'. Ironically, Assad's 'demonstration of power' proved successful – though primarily because Moscow, concerned about his demands for urgent deliveries of advanced weaponry, contacted Washington with a request for mediation. In turn, US intervention prevented an Israeli onslaught and convinced Gemayel to withdraw his surviving troops from Zahle.

Begin reacted by ordering a new campaign: instead of targeting Syrian SAMs or the bases of Palestinian militants, his new target were the population and the infrastructure of Lebanon. In this fashion, he not only provoked a war that, de facto, is still ongoing at the time of writing, but created a conflict that resulted in the prototype for countless Israeli–Palestinian confrontations since.

On 10 July 1981, the IDF/AF bombed roads and villages in the Habbush area, the Zahrani River bridge, and the area south of Sidon, killing nearly 50 Lebanese civilians. Feeling provoked, the Palestinians reacted by deploying Soviet-made BM-21 multiple rocket launchers (MRLs) to rocket Qiryat Shemona, a town in northern Israel. Of course, Begin returned the favour and over the following days the IDF/AF expanded and intensified its campaign of air strikes, but many of these targeted civilians again: unmolested, the Palestinians continued targeting Qiryat Shemona and added Nahariya to their list of targets. By 15 July, the IDF was deploying not only its air force, but the Sea Corps and artillery of Northern Command to target southern Lebanon, especially refugee camps in the Damour and Sidon areas, and the Lebanese economy. The Palestinians, who had meanwhile bolstered their artillery to about 140 rocket launchers and 50 Soviet-made M-46 guns, reinforced their shelling of settlements in northern Israel: when the IDF escalated by targeting PLO offices in South Beirut on 17 July, they showered all the towns and settlements from Nahariya in the west to Qiryat Shemona in the east with rockets with such intensity that the civilians began to flee in droves. Facing fierce criticism, Begin ordered Eitan to 'finish what he began': the latter reacted by conducting a comprehensive campaign of air strikes, naval attacks, and artillery barrages that caused immense damage to the infrastructure of southern Lebanon, but little harm to the militants. The rate at which the Palestinians continued hammering northern Israel only increased and by 21 July 1981, all public life in northern Israel was at a standstill. Eventually, this 'Two Weeks War' ended through a US-mediated ceasefire on 24 July 1981, and even then in part because President Reagan ordered a halt to deliveries of additional F-16s to Israel.[3] Ironically, the Israeli leadership learned nothing at all from this confrontation: on the contrary, their enemies learned that they could condition Israeli actions by targeting the country's civilian population. Another irony of this ceasefire was the fact that it froze only a part of the conflict: obliging Israel and the PLO to restrain from violence on the territory of Lebanon only. The Palestinians thus continued low-scale attacks on Israelis in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and abroad, in turn providing the Israelis with the opportunity to complain about continuous 'terrorist' activities both 'in' Israel and abroad.

Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin (foreground left, with glass in his hand), with his newly appointed Minister of Defence, Ariel Sharon, at the party presenting the new government on 6 August 1981. (Photo by Saar Yakov, GPO)

US Special Envoy for the Middle East, Phili Habib (second from the left), with Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin, at Ben Gurion Airport in 1981. (IPPA/National Library of Israel)

OPERATION PINES

On 6 August 1981, Israeli Prime Minister Begin presented his new cabinet. Amongst others, and as a reward for helping secure his narrow win in elections, this included Ariel Sharon as Minister of Defence. Former General of the IDF and hailed a hero of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Sharon switched to politics during that conflict and won a seat in the Knesset in 1974. Like Rafael Eitan, he was convinced that the violence was the only way to deal with the Arabs, and through the mid-1970s, he used his position to intensify the construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip, Sinai, West Bank, and Golan, as a tool for preventing the possibility of an Arab return and securing the local water resources.

Within hours of assuming his new position, Sharon became very keen on developments in Lebanon, and demanded that the head of Israeli Military Intelligence (abbreviated to AMAN in Hebrew), Yehoshua Saguy, brief him on Syrian deployment. On 9 August, he visited the headquarters (HQ) of Northern Command IDF and received a very detailed presentation from the Chief Intelligence Officer, Moshe Tzurich. Four days later, Sharon was briefed on the IDF operations program, and then went on to meet Bashir Gemayel. On his insistence, the two discussed only three topics: hotspots of Palestinian militant activities against Israel, and the deployment of the Syrian Army, and Syrian SAMs in Lebanon. On 1 September 1981, General Amir Drori replaced General Avigdor Ben-Gal as the CO Northern Command: the next day, he received a visit from Sharon, who demanded that the IDF eliminate Palestinian activity within its area of responsibility. Of course, Drori could not instigate a war on his own, and related plans had existed since long before, but now it became obvious that Sharon was pushing for a new conflict. During a subsequent meeting with Begin, he then presented three options for his 'solution to PLO attacks on Israel':

- political action with limited military involvement
- US-negotiated settlement
- wide-scale military action

Concluding US involvement to be the least-preferable option, Begin supported Sharon's vision and asked him to prepare a detailed plan for each option. As a result, on 30 October 1981, the plan for Operation Pines came into being. This was presented to Begin on 3 November, when Sharon stressed that Pines had three objectives:

- elimination of the PLO
- pushing Syrians away from Israel's borders
- establishing a land connection between the northern and southern enclaves of the Lebanese Christians

Furthermore, Sharon demanded from Begin permission to meet Reagan's Special Envoy to the Middle East, Philip Habib, and complain about the USA failing to fulfil their obligations from the ceasefire of 24 July, in forcing the PLO to stop acting against Israel – as the means to start setting up the military action.

FAKE ROUTINE

At the time the US-mediated ceasefire brought an end to Begin and Eitan's pointless barrage on southern Lebanon and the Palestinian shelling of northern Israel, there existed more than 40 armed militias in Lebanon: indeed, some sources counted as many as 58 different armed organisations and groups. No fewer than 15 of these – including several Palestinian factions – had their own offices in Tripoli. Concerned it might be forced to withdraw its ADF contingent, Syria thus added one more: equipping and training elements of the pro-Syrian Arab Democratic Party, Hafez al-Assad's brother Rifa'at established the Knights of Arabia – loyal solely to him. At first, the Knights were sent to Tripoli and became involved in the Alawite-Sunni feud, greatly increasing the already existent confusion caused by the activities of numerous small militias that were constantly switching alliances. In turn, the Lebanese Army – re-established despite massive problems during the 1978–1981 period – began experiencing alarming rates of defections. Numerous officers and non-commissioned officers had left, usually taking their equipment with them. Many joined the re-established Arab Lebanese Army (ALA; destroyed by the Syrians in 1978, as described in Volume 2), eventually leaving General Victor Khoury, the Chief-of-Staff of the Lebanese Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Libanaises*, FAL), with next to nobody to command.

BASHIR'S MASKIROVKA[4]

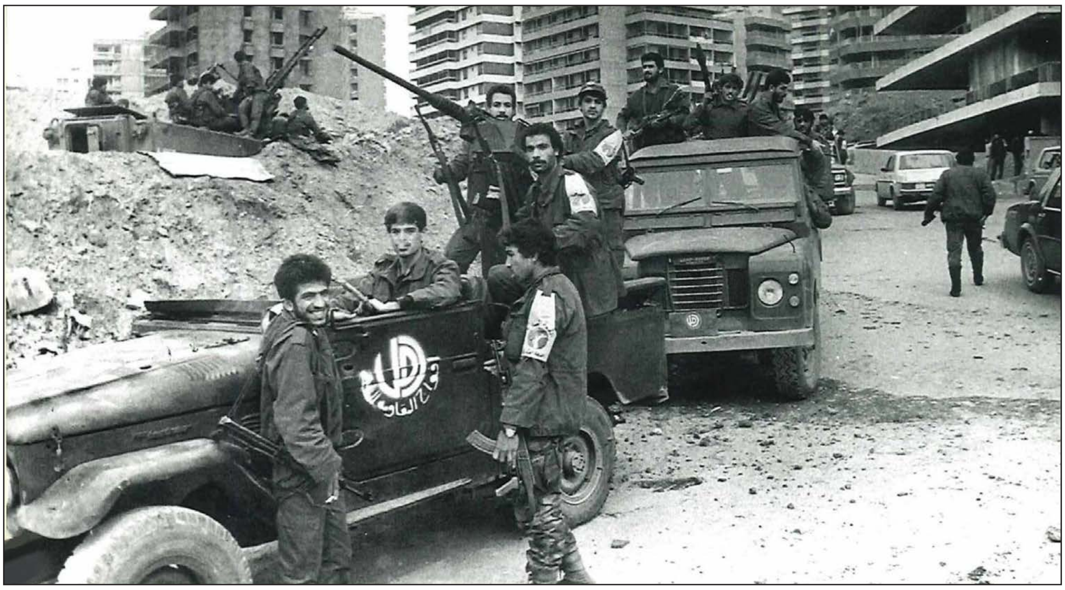
In the meantime, on 4 and 5 August 1981, fighting erupted in Tripoli between militias of the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front (ALF; which predominantly consisted of Palestinians) and the pro-Syrian Arab Democratic Party (ADP). A ceasefire mediated by representatives of the ADF was broken, and eventually the ADP sided with the ADF. Almost simultaneously, fighting erupted in two other spots. In Beirut, the Iran-supported Amal clashed with another new group, the Organisation of Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL), while in southern Lebanon Amal clashed with the pro-Soviet Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), which was recruiting among the local Shi'a. The ADF did its best to keep the fighting parties apart, but the countless ceasefires were always fragile at best.

Some of the few surviving officers of the ill-fated Arab Lebanon Army – all of whom were defectors of the Lebanese Armed Forces – seen in 1981. (via Issam Bteddini)

A pair of British-made FV.601 Saladin armoured cars of the Lebanese Army, seen in the Hazmiyeh region in 1982. (via Issam Bteddini)

All of this was of little concern to Bashir Gemayel: bolstered by Israeli arms deliveries, his militias held their positions firm, while he was expertly coached by his father Pierre into manipulating all the foreign powers. In July 1981, he communicated to Begin that he was about to launch a public relations campaign quasi-disconnecting him from Israel. In early August, he then travelled to the USA for a 'private official' visit supposedly aiming to re-establish his father's contacts. Actually, he first met Nicholas Veliotes, Assistant Secretary of State for Middle Eastern Affairs, and discussed options for creating a new government of Lebanon that would exercise control over the entire territory, including the enclave controlled by Major Saad Haddad in the south (with help of what as of 1978–1981 was known as the 'Free Lebanese Army', but subsequently was colloquially called the South Lebanon Army, SLA). Furthermore, Gemayel is known to have asserted that Lebanon would be

Bashir Gemayel (in suit, standing in the jeep) inspecting Phalange combatants during a parade in Jounieh in 1981. (via Efim Sandler)



Combatants of the Amal militia with their Toyota and Land Rover technicals in Beirut, probably in 1980. Visible in the background is an ex-FAL M113 APC, with a Soviet-made ZU-23-2 antiaircraft gun mounted on its top. (via Issam Bteddini)

a better ally of the USA than Israel, because it was accepted by Arab neighbours, even if Christian-dominated. Finally, he stressed that to achieve this he had to remove two obstacles: the PLO and the Syrian contingent of the ADF. Obviously, there was nobody who could help him achieve such aims – except for Israel and the USA.

During the following days, the Phalangist leader then went on to meet representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and William Clark – who had been presented to him as an assistant of Alexander Haig, but was actually an advisor to Reagan. The peak of Gemayel's visit was reached when he met the director of the CIA, William Casey, on 13 August 1981. During that conference, he once again promoted the idea of an alliance between Lebanon and the USA, and indeed: of getting US troops to his country, as a better option than one of Washington relying on Israel. Surprisingly enough, Casey proved positive and not only called Gemayel a capable man but promised that he would discuss further cooperation with Haig and Clark. On the next day, the Phalangist leader was flown to Cairo by an aircraft of the US Air Force, and then to his stronghold in Jounieh by a Kaman SH-2 Seasprite helicopter of the US Navy. The most obvious result of this visit was the establishment of a direct communication link between the headquarters of the Phalange and the US Embassy in Beirut.

Satisfied with the results of Gemayel's meetings with the Americans, in early September 1981 Camille Chamoun – former president of Lebanon, and now the leader of the Lebanese Front (by then an organisation on paper only, without any power or influence) – announced that all Christian factions in Lebanon were backing off from their alliance with Israel and keen to cooperate with the Arab League. Indeed, Chamoun went as far as to invite the Libyan leader Moammar el-Qadhafi to visit Lebanon, while Gemayel meanwhile established contacts with the Druze leader Wallid Jumblatt.

The Syrians tracked Bashir's activity and Hafez al-Assad swallowed the bait: concluding that the young Christian leader was not only growing stronger but was well on the way to becoming a president of Lebanon, he decided to probe him for possible cooperation. On 3 September 1981, Assad received the visit of the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faysal, and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah, and together they agreed to arrange a meeting between the heads of Syrian intelligence services in Lebanon, Muhammad Ghanem, Bashir, and the ambassadors of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, in Baabda Palace in Beirut. Taking place on 4 September 1981, the meeting was extremely tense: Bashir demanded a stop to arms supplies to the Palestinians, a ceasefire between Syrian and Lebanese forces, and the opening of all checkpoints into West Beirut. Although stopping short of demanding a withdrawal of the Syrian Arab Army's contingent from Lebanon, the leader of the Christian Phalange called them 'occupation forces'. Ghanem responded in a polite, but negative manner and the meeting thus ended inconclusively. However, it was a start: both leaders of the Lebanese Christians – Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun – considered it a positive development, and thus arranged another meeting for 11 September 1981. On that

Major Saad Haddad (foreground, first from the right), with officers of the Norwegian Norbatt IV, including Field Priest Ole Askvig Ogaard, in Metula in 1980 or 1981. (by Sven H. Olsen)

day, an agreement was reached a few hours later and the so-called 'Museum Crossing' – adjacent to the hippodrome and the French Ambassador's home – was reopened for public traffic for the first time in five months.

Continuing his game, on 4 October 1981, Bashir Gemayel secretly visited Israel for a meeting with Begin, Sharon, and Yitzhak Hofi, the head of Israel's foreign intelligence service, Mossad. He promptly confronted the Israelis with a number of complaints about the lack of support, emphasising there was not one formal document signed between the two parties, and that he was lacking confidence in Israeli preparedness to deal with the 'Syrian issue'. Furthermore, he mentioned 'increasing US pressure in the region' and announced his expectation that this would result in the deployment of US armed forces. Unimpressed, Hofi replied, rather bluntly, that Israel would not do whatever Christians wanted and would definitely not commit to fight the Syrians but would support their struggle if this was coordinated with Israel. Foremost, the Israelis wanted to know how Bashir was planning to deal with the 'Palestinian issue', especially pending presidential elections planned for 1982.

THE PLOT UNFOLDS

The resulting developments began to unfold only a few weeks later. On 6 November 1981, Major Haddad announced his resignation as leader of the SLA. Broadcast via the *Voice of Hope* radio, this was officially explained as due to the 'lack of support and understanding from Israel' – and caused great uneasiness amongst the population of southern Lebanon. After an improvised explosive device (IED) then, 'conveniently', killed three of his troops a few days later, Haddad reassumed his position and promptly announced there would be no truce with the Palestinians, irrespective of any ceasefire between the PLO and Israel. Immediately after, and in full agreement with Begin, he sabotaged the electricity- and water supply for the headquarters of the UN peacekeepers in Naqoura and closed the 'border' between the enclave controlled by his troops and the rest of Lebanon, de facto taking about 300 UNIFIL soldiers as hostages. Immediately after, he launched a campaign of artillery attacks on nearby Palestinian positions.

At that time, central Lebanon was already a scene of a numerous assassinations and car-bombings: many of these were a part of the strife between the CIA-supported pro-Iraqi- and pro-Iranian groups. For example, on 9 September 1981, the French Ambassador to Lebanon, Louis Delamare, was murdered: his body was found – riddled with bullets – near a Syrian checkpoint in West Beirut, but the responsibility for his assassination was assumed by the Lebanese Red Brigades, a group supposedly supported by Iran, and as revenge for France granting political asylum to the first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr. In November, Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, leader of the Amal Movement of the Lebanese Shi'a, narrowly survived an assassination attempt in which his car was raked by machine gun fire. However, Fadlallah's reaction brought this affair to a sudden end: on 15 December 1981 a car bomb blew up the Embassy of Iraq in Beirut. With the loss of his ambassador and most of the staff, even the strongman in Baghdad, Saddam Hussein at-Tikriti then gave up his pretensions of maintaining influence in Lebanon – although meanwhile embroiled in a bitter war with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was to last for the next eight years.

However, all of this was 'just ambient noise' in comparison to what Gemayel and the Israelis were now doing: their first target became the Lebanese National Movement (LNM, but at the time better known under its French title, *Mouvement National Libanais*, MNL). This coalition of leftist groups allied with the PLO controlled about 18,000 combatants (the most effective of which was al-Mourabitoun, described in Volume 2), and was in the process of transforming itself into a major political force with a wide base, controlling most of West Beirut. Through September and October, the MNL was subjected to a series of attacks that killed more than 130 and wounded over 400 of its members. Through November, it was subjected to additional attacks in southern Lebanon that killed another 83 and wounded 225, while in Beirut it lost over 100. In the majority of these cases, responsibility was assumed by a minor group named The Front for the Liberation of Lebanon from Foreigners (FLLF). It still remains unknown whether any of the Lebanese, Palestinians or Syrians involved were aware of this fact, but FLLF was actually a terrorist organisation set up on order from, and directed by, the Chief-of-Staff IDF, General Rafael Eitan.

FANNING THE FLAMES[5]

Ironically, while Yasser Arafat was quick to accuse Israel – and inscriptions in Hebrew were found in the wreckage of a car bomb that improperly detonated in Sidon in February 1982 – nobody believed him: at most, a few suspected Haddad instead.[6] The primary reason for this confusion was the effective propaganda meanwhile aired by the *Voice of Hope* and the Israeli-sponsored *Radio Phalangist Voice of Lebanon*: both enjoyed popularity in Lebanon and easily outplayed all of their competitors. Certainly enough, the PLO and the MNL attempted to crack-down on violence: they posted notices in all public places they could reach, banning everybody from carrying firearms, wearing uniforms, or driving military vehicles, and demanded the removal of all checkpoints. The MNL went as far as to destroy several minor rival militias and their strongpoints. However, in grand total this effort remained fruitless because, as described above, the actual instigator remained unknown. Indeed, as the campaign of car bombs continued, it caused mistrust between a constantly growing number of parties. By early 1982, Amal was not only back to fighting the LCP, but a coalition of Palestinian and Lebanese leftists. As the fighting spread from Beirut to Baalbek and Tyre, it pinned down most of the MNL and Yasser Arafat's Fatah, preventing them from stopping the violence. Indeed, by February even the ADF and Syrians proved unable to continue mediating, as Fatah was now at odds with the Sa'iqa: a Palestinian faction controlled by Damascus. As a result – and much to the satisfaction of Major Haddad and the Israelis – Fatah felt forced to abandon its positions within the UNIFIL zone in southern Lebanon.

Combatants of Fatah's Force 17 – a commando unit that provided personal guards for the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat – seen in Beirut, near the positions of the Amal militia, in 1980. (Jamal Itani Collection)

A Magach-6B main battle tank of the IDF, covered by a camouflage net, seen being transported to the Golan Heights during one of several alerts in 1981 and early 1982. (IPPA/National Library of Israel)

The crisis instigated by Eitan's FLLF was far from over: in mid-April 1982, a six-day-long campaign of bitter fighting between Amal and its rivals in Beirut left 94 dead and 243 wounded. Then a number of Sunni religious figures were assassinated, while another series of car bombs hit the offices of the Ba'ath Party, Fatah, and Sa'iqa in Tripoli, killing 45 and wounding 98. Overall, as the internal discipline within several groups degenerated, the PLO-LNM alliance began falling apart. By May 1982, Lebanon was thus, once again, in a state of a chaotic civil war. Of course, the Phalangist media was all the time blaming the Palestinians – and especially Salah Khalaf, Director of the PLO's Security Department – for everything.

Not only did the IDF continue adding fuel to the fire through the FLLF's activity, on 14 December 1981 Begin announced the annexation of the Golan Heights, captured from Syria during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War. With the help of the so-called 'Golan Heights Law', he extended Israel's administration and jurisdiction to the occupied territory. Not only was Hafez al-Assad displeased by this violation of the UN Charter, but so was nearly all of the Middle East. Taking place only two years after the Camp David Treaty between Egypt and Israel, this unnecessarily increased animosity between Israel and her neighbours. And yet, the Begin government carried on in the same fashion, Sharon meanwhile developing his own plot and, six days later, presenting the plan for Operation Pines to the entire government for the first time, emphasising four goals:

- prevention of attacks on Israel
- elimination of Palestinian armed resistance in Lebanon
- forcing the Syrians to withdraw
- creation of a climate for setting up a government friendly to Israel

At the end of this meeting, Begin demanded that the cabinet authorise him, Sharon, and Eitan to launch this operation at their discretion: to his surprise and disappointment, the majority of ministers declined. Certainly enough, this did not stop the three 'hawks': to test Syrian reactions, on 19 January 1982 Eitan sent four jets of the IDF/AF to violate Lebanese air space, straight over the Baka'a Valley and into the zone protected by Syrian SAMs. Unsurprisingly, the SyAADF units reacted by firing two SA-6s: both missed and, at least officially, both sides refused to comment on resulting rumours in the press. However, there was no doubt that Begin, Sharon, and Eitan had what they wanted, for it was the first time since the ceasefire of 24 July 1981 that the Syrians had opened fire at the Israelis. Correspondingly, on 31 January 1982, Sharon and Eitan proposed to attack several PLO bases from the air and the sea and, if there was a large-scale response, initiate the plan for Operation Pines. This time, Begin's cabinet approved: however, the operation was delayed several times because of bad weather and, eventually, cancelled.

ASSAD'S WEAKNESS[9]

In Syria, by now it was obvious that the government of Hafez al-Assad was lacking the capability of not only countering the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights – which openly violated the US-

THE RISE OF HEZBOLLAH[7]

As described in Volume 2, in 1974 a new civic movement of the Lebanese Shi'a came into being in the form of the Harakat Amal ('The Movement of the Deprived', or 'Hope'). Initially, this was another little militia with very limited influence. However, links between the Shi'a of Lebanon and the Shi'a of Iran were long existent, and in 1975 Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi II of Iran decided to strengthen Amal through granting permission for Mustafa Sadr, a cleric from the holy city of Qom, to travel to Lebanon. Thanks to support from the Shah's intelligence service SAVAK, and because much of the Lebanese Shi'a clergy received its religious education in Qom, Sadr quickly established himself as the local 'Imam' (religious leader) and, the same year reorganised the Amal as a network aiming to address all aspects of life of the Shi'a community. Ironically, Sadr quickly became an 'asset' of the Beirut station of the CIA and regularly provided valuable information collected during his travels in neighbouring Arab states. However, as well as being in contact with the SAVAK and the CIA, he was also in touch with the Iranian religious leader in exile, Imam Ruhollah Khomeini: the two had met in 1971 when Sadr left such lasting impressions that his niece married one of Khomeini's sons. Initially, Amal was at odds with the PLO, but this changed through 1975–1976, when Arafat advised his movement to provide military training to Khomeini's followers. The imam's sons Ahmad and Mostafa underwent courses in Lebanon accompanied by several hundred other Iranian nationals. Two of the latter eventually rose to head the future Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC; officially established in early 1981), and the Ministry of Information (colloquially VEVAK) of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), once the Shah of Iran was forced into exile in late January 1979.

Ironically, Sadr did not experience this 'victory of Islam': he disappeared under mysterious circumstances while visiting Libya in 1978.[8] It remains unknown who exactly had him liquidated, but considering not only the Libyan leader Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qaddaffi had his own ideas about Islam and Islamists, but that the Israeli Operation Stone of Wisdom of that year killed hundreds of Lebanese Shi'a (in turn quickly swelling the ranks of the Amal), and that the quasi-'Islamic' Revolution in Iran was already in the brewing, it is certain that the list of suspects was very long.

Upon Sadr's demise, the new spiritual leader of the Amal became Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah. Reaching this position shortly after the revolution in Iran, he and many of his followers became eager to win the goodwill of the new strongmen in Tehran – and versa vice: in May 1979, Dr Sadeq, Deputy Director of the Defence Council of the IRI arrived for talks with Fadlallah, who in turn introduced him to Yasser Arafat. The IRI and the PLO thus established ties that remain close until this very day.

The following year, Amal appointed its new leader, the lawyer Nabih Berri. His new deputy, Hussain Musawi, was then appointed the commander of the military wing. This proved a bad decision, for 'moderate' Berri and 'radical' Musawi were soon at odds. Obsessed by Khomeinism, the latter dreamt about running an 'Islamic Revolution of Lebanon'. Eventually, Musawi lost but, together with his nephew Abbas Musawi and several followers, he established a splinter group named the Islamic Amal. In turn, this was reinforced by Mohammed Fadlallah and a group of Iraqi Shi'a, and began receiving sponsorship from Tehran. When Fadlallah established himself as the spiritual mentor, the Islamic Amal was reorganised into 'The Party of God': Hezbollah.

Khomeini with son Ahmad and two grandsons. Both of Khomeini's sons – Ahmad and Mostafa – underwent 'military' training in Lebanon, largely furnished by Fatah and the PLO. Thus came into being links between the quasi-clerical regime dominated by the IRGC in Tehran, and the Palestinians, which remain strong today. (Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran Release) negotiated arrangement from 1974 – or even the looming invasion of Lebanon. Arguably, thanks to the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR, his government was doing its utmost to accelerate the military build-up and – in attempt to secure additional arms deliveries – went as far as to invite Moscow to deploy 2,000 additional advisors to the country. However, this was far from enough: actually, it proved counterproductive. Combined with the lack of reaction to the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights, and an ongoing insurgency, it only increased the already widespread dissent within the population. Indeed, while renowned for their traditions of welcoming guests, Syrians – including military officers – generally opposed the increased presence of 'Communist' troops in the country: as described in Volume 2, the campaign of assassinations of government officials that had been going on since 1978 further intensified, gradually transforming into an inter-ethnic and inter-religious war between the Sunni majority and the representatives of the government and its security services. The situation culminated in November 1981, when the Muslim Brotherhood managed to assassinate the Chief-of-Staff SyAAF & SyAADF (and a veteran MiG-21 pilot and a hero of the October 1973 War) Major General Mamdouh Hamdi Abazza. Worse yet: by early 1982, dozens of officers of the army and air force began plotting a coup against the Assad government. This was to be initiated with air strikes against the Presidential Palace and the Building of the Central Committee of the Ba'ath Party in Damascus and take place in coordination with a popular uprising in Hama, which in turn was hoped might help the Muslim Brotherhood spark a nation-wide uprising.

HAMA MASSACRE

The plot was uncovered by the notorious Syrian Arab Air Force Intelligence Directorate in January 1982 before it could be launched. The backlash was merciless: hundreds of involved officers were quickly arrested and dozens summarily executed. In turn, and because the government went to great extents to keep this affair secret, the plotters of the uprising in Hama failed to find out in time. The purge of the armed forces was continued by raids conducted by the armed forces and security services all over the country.

In early hours of 2 February 1982, an army unit searching the Old City of Hama found the hideout of Omar Jawwad, a local commander of a guerrilla group associated with the Muslim Brotherhood – and was promptly ambushed. As both the army and the insurgents rushed reinforcements to the scene, Jawwad called for a general uprising in Hama: this was forwarded by loudspeakers on all mosques, usually used for the call to prayer. Hundreds of insurgents emerged 'out of nowhere' to attack local police stations and the homes of Ba'ath Party officials: by the morning of 2 February, over 70 government officials had been killed, and the insurgents declared Hama a 'free city', calling on other Syrians to rise up against the 'infidels'.

Assad reacted faster than any insurgents ever could. He mobilised the armed forces and rushed regular units of the Syrian Arab Army to surround the city, while calling upon the population to surrender: he issued a public warning that anybody remaining inside would be considered a 'terrorist'. When many of the army troops refused to open fire, the strongman in Damascus ordered the 3rd Armoured Division, commanded by Major General Shafiq Fayyad, to the scene. Born in Qardaha, the place of origin of the Assad clan, and having his son married to the daughter of Hafez's brother Rifa'at, Fayyad was one of the closest confidantes of the 'inner circle' of the Assad family. Similarly, the 3rd Division had already proven itself when brutally smashing a similar popular uprising in Aleppo in April 1980. Declaring everybody inside Hama to be terrorists, its 47th Armoured Brigade and 21st Mechanised Brigade surrounded the city and began a merciless siege, supported by extensive use of artillery. To bolster their efforts, and to assure the loyalty of the army troops, Rifa'at al-Assad then deployed an equivalent force of his Defence Companies (*Saraya ad-Difa*, SAD) – a paramilitary service created solely for the purpose of safeguarding the Assadist regime.

Perpetrators of the Hama Massacre of 1982: Rifa'at al-Assad (left) and Hafez al-Assad. (Official Release)

Rifa'at al-Assad's SADs and Fayyad's 3rd Armoured Division made no exception for the Roman-era waterwheels for which Hama is famous around the world: during the three-week-long siege of February 1982, these were as damaged by artillery barrages as most of the rest of the city. (Aljude Collection)

Hama was savaged by artillery for three full weeks, during which most of the Old City was demolished. Then an all-out ground assault was launched, with tanks – supported by Mi-8 helicopters equipped with pods for unguided rockets and machine guns – advanced down the main avenues from several directions. Those not killed in the siege and following assaults were rounded up and summarily executed; those not executed were jailed for years. Initial diplomatic reports indicated over 1,000 as 'killed in the fighting': subsequent estimates of the number of casualties went as high as between 10,000 and 25,000, including more than 1,000 soldiers; while Rifa'at al-Assad eventually boasted of killing 38,000; the Muslim Brotherhood claimed 40,000 died, with 100,000 expelled and 15,000 disappeared. The majority of victims were quickly bulldozed into mass graves atop of which two parks and several apartment blocks were constructed: nobody was ever to recall the tragedy.

Hafez al-Assad's brutal suppression of the uprising in Hama – ever since colloquially known as the 'Hama Massacre' – had the desired effects. It broke the back of the Islamist insurrection in Syria, once and forever: the few surviving leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were forced to flee into exile, never to return to their homeland. The few other insurgent factions either surrendered or slipped into hiding. Foremost, it had the desired deterrent effect: nobody dared organising a new coup plot or openly oppose the Assad regime for the following 30 years. However, in combination with the failed plot by SyAAF officers from early 1982, it left the Syrian armed forces badly shaken and weakened only months short of another major showdown with their nemesis.

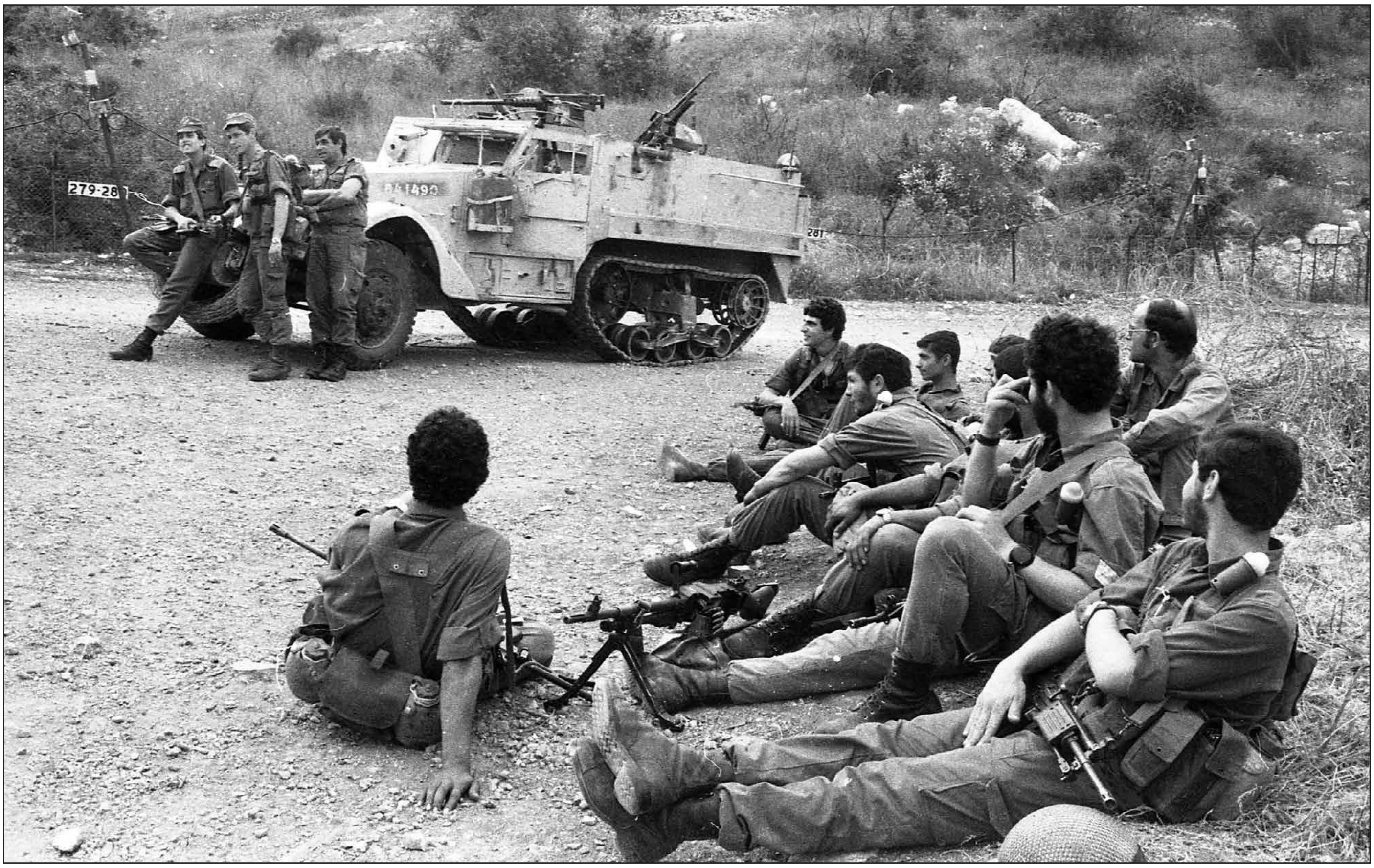
2

FROM PINES TO PEACE FOR GALILEE

As an operation against Syrian SAM sites and an invasion of Lebanon was repeatedly delayed due to bad weather, Begin – still mindful of Reagan's reaction to the events of July 1981 – became uncomfortable: he was concerned about a possible US reaction. Correspondingly, he first sent Saguy, the Director of AMAN, to Washington as a special envoy. Back to Israel on 5 February 1982, Saguy reported that Alexander Haig was supportive of the Israeli vision but, demanded no escalation of the situation on its own and questioned terms like 'large scale' and 'recognized provocation'. Ignoring US concerns, Sharon went into action. To avoid any kind of negative repercussions – and as usual for all the Israeli wars – he required deception: the development of an officially authorised legend aiming at seducing the public at home and abroad through provision of a convenient moral-political explanation. Unknown to the public at the time, one of the first related steps was to change the codename for the planned invasion of Lebanon: this was to provide reference to the attitude of Christians around the world to the geographic area of Galilee, widely associated with Jesus Christ. Another issue was that of fooling members of Begin's cabinet. This was required to grant permission for what was actually to become an all-out invasion and a complete reshaping of the Lebanese political- and security landscape as just 24-hours, 48-hours at most, perhaps a 72-hour-long anti-terror operation, excluding any confrontation with the Syrian armed forces, and stopping well short of Beirut. All the fighting that happened before, after, or outside the scope of the operation was either conveniently mis-explained as Palestinian/Syrian provocations necessitating the invasion, or completely ignored – as were the actual purposes of the invasion: wiping out the Palestinian forces in Lebanon, pushing the Syrian Arab Army out of the country, and securing Beirut to help Bashir Gemayel establish himself as a president.[1]

PLANNING THE PINES

Contrary to the situation in the first Begin cabinet of 1977–1981, when there were at least three key members competent in military affairs (Yigal Yadin, Ezer Weizman, and Moshe Dayan), in the second cabinet Sharon was the only one with such qualifications. Arguably, Mordechai Tzipori, former Minister of Defence, was still around, however, he now held the post of Minister of Communication, and was closely controlled by Begin, who isolated him from military affairs. Therefore, Sharon made two decisions: one was to let Begin deal with the political part, while retaining the full control over all the military planning and execution of Operation Pines and providing the cabinet with only the information he was ready to share. The other was related to the issue of facing the Syrians: he



Regular IDF infantry taking a break during a patrol along the Lebanese border. This unit was assigned to one of the territorial brigades of Northern Command, recognisable by the presence of an old US-made M3 half-track, as frequently used by territorial units (all the new hardware was assigned to regular or reservist units of the IDF). (Photo by Yosi Elmakis) was certain the IDF would have to fight them and never excluded the option of a major confrontation but, also that he could limit the scope of that part of the operation. The reason was that he envisaged Operation Pines to be conducted as a 'lightning war': one that would destroy the Palestinians and drive their survivors yet further away from Israel.

Certainly enough, Sharon was not the one who initiated planning for an invasion of Lebanon: Begin's government began searching for a broader operation against the Palestinians following the failure of Operation Stone of Wisdom (better known as 'Operation Litani') in 1978. Northern Command under Avigdor Ben-Gal developed several related plans in 1979, following contemporary Minister of Defence, Ezer Weizman's order to develop a design that would connect the two Christian-controlled enclaves, and thus secure what became known as the 'new order'. The first plan was codenamed 'Sons of God' and envisaged an advance up to the line connecting Jounieh with Zahle, with an option of taking over the whole of Lebanon. Around the same time, another plan had been developed: Operation Lat of Reciprocity: this envisaged the IDF securing the area up to the Zahrani River and the southern Beka'a Valley.[2]

By 1981, plan for Operation Air Peaks came into being, followed by three additional ones, Cedars, Teddy Bear, and Northern Bear. Teddy Bear envisaged operations lasing just eight hours, and cleaning the 'Fatah Land' between Arnoun and Nabatiyah; Northern Bear was to last 48 hours and secure the area between the Litani and Zahrani rivers, while Cedars would have been its extension lasting 96 hours and considered an advance all the way to the line connecting Beirut with Zahle, engaging the Syrians, and destroying the SAM sites in the Beka'a Valley. The plan for Operation Cedars was subsequently developed into two versions:

- Cedars A: including a push to engage the Syrians in the Jezzine area and the Beka'a Valley
- Cedars B: entirely focusing on fighting the Palestinians, while avoiding a confrontation with the Syrians

ISRAELI MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ABOUT LEBANON[3]

Within the rank and file of the Israeli intelligence community, and especially the AMAN, Lebanon had never been considered a 'high-priority' region. According to the criteria of the 1960s and 1970s, it did not have armed forces that could confront Israel. Moreover, it was considered a 'friendly state' due to the Christian domination of the politics. Of course, AMAN did establish a department for tracking Palestinians in the country, and Northern Command's Intelligence Department – headed by Moshe Tzurich and about 300 strong – provided field intelligence to its units. However, in grand total, there was little knowledge about Lebanon and its population, and Northern Command's intelligence-gathering capabilities were very limited.

This deficit was realised only after Operation Stone of Wisdom. In 1979, AMAN established a new 'Lebanon Branch' under the command of Eli Dekel, an officer who had previously dealt with Egypt and Sinai. The work of this department was to play a crucial role in subsequent IDF planning. During preparations for operations Sons of God, and then Peace for Galilee, the Lebanon Branch emphasised several points, including:

- the Qaraoun Dam was considered a threat because of the assessment that the Syrians could blow it up in the event of an Israeli advance on Beka'a
- the issue of selecting routes for the advance for mechanised formations proved to be far more complex than expected, even more so if the operation was to be run in winter
- there was a need to map Beirut
- there was the necessity for intelligence on Syrian options, including those in the event of an Israeli advance in the direction of Damascus
- Northern Command had to work more closely with the IDF/AF in order to define targets for air strikes

Due to the limitation of means and resources, not all these issues could be addressed effectively: for example, the was no clear understanding of Syrian forces in Lebanon. Some Palestinian targets were missed because they were the responsibility of the Palestinian Department and there was little or no cooperation. Several routes had been geographically underrated and proved to be unsuitable for armour. The data flow towards the field units was ineffective and could not be considered as real time. To cover the gaps, AMAN demanded calling up reserve duty personnel that was done only partially. Another important point was that there was no profound analysis of possible Syrian reactions. The planning had been done with little attention to the Syrian ability to block an IDF advance towards the Beirut–Damascus Highway.

From 1980, Northern Command's Intelligence Department had been tasked with collecting intelligence for the preparation of Operation Pines and preparing relevant documentation. There were several issues regarding this work: the initial intelligence database covered the area up to the line Sidon–Hasbaya, while Sharon demanded information up to the Beirut–Damascus Highway and Zahle. In order to improve the situation, Tzurich required assistance from each and every possible source. Amongst others, he contacted ADAL, the South Lebanon Regional Command managing all activities in the Haddad-controlled enclave in the south of the country. Mossad provided information about the Christian enclave in the north. Starting in 1981, additional intelligence was provided by the IDF/AF, which began deploying Zahavan unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for real time imaging reconnaissance. Northern Command demanded the deployment of UAVs for mapping, but the air force turned this request down. Therefore, Tzurich contacted the Chief Officer of the Intelligence Corps, Tzvika Shiller, and via him the Tadiran company: in this fashion he managed to acquire four Soreq 2 UAVs (better known under their air force designation as Mastiff Mk 2). These were upgraded through the addition of the capability to transfer videos captured by their cameras in real time back to base, and entered service with a dedicated Nachshon unit, assigned to the Chief Intelligence Officer of Northern Command. Initially operated from Ramat Dalton, the unit eventually found a home at an airfield outside Qiryat Shemona, but had control stations at Mount Dov and near Misgav Am. Later on, and in addition to intelligence-gathering purposes, UAVs were also

Next, Eitan ordered the IDF to prepare for the latter option, and this is what then resulted in the plan for Operation Pines. As mentioned above, this plan was presented to Sharon on 30 October 1981. Through the following month, Northern Command then developed three versions of it:

- Winter Pines: for an operation during the winter, when it would be impossible to conduct seaborne and airborne landings due to the bad weather
- Regular Pines, which envisaged an operation lasting 72 hours
- Rolling Pines, which envisaged an extension for another 24 hours

In December 1981, the plan for Operation Pines was updated to include elements of Operation Citrus, in the form of a landing at Jounieh and entering Beirut from the north. Finally, in April 1982, the General Staff of the IDF adopted the plan for Operation Rolling Pines of Northern Command – as Operation Small Pines. Final refinement was undertaken in April–May 1982: by then, the plan included several refinements, Operation Citrus was cancelled without replacement, the majority of heliborne operations converted to ground advances, and the enterprise was codenamed Operation Peace for Galilee. The finalised plan was as follows:

1. **Methods**

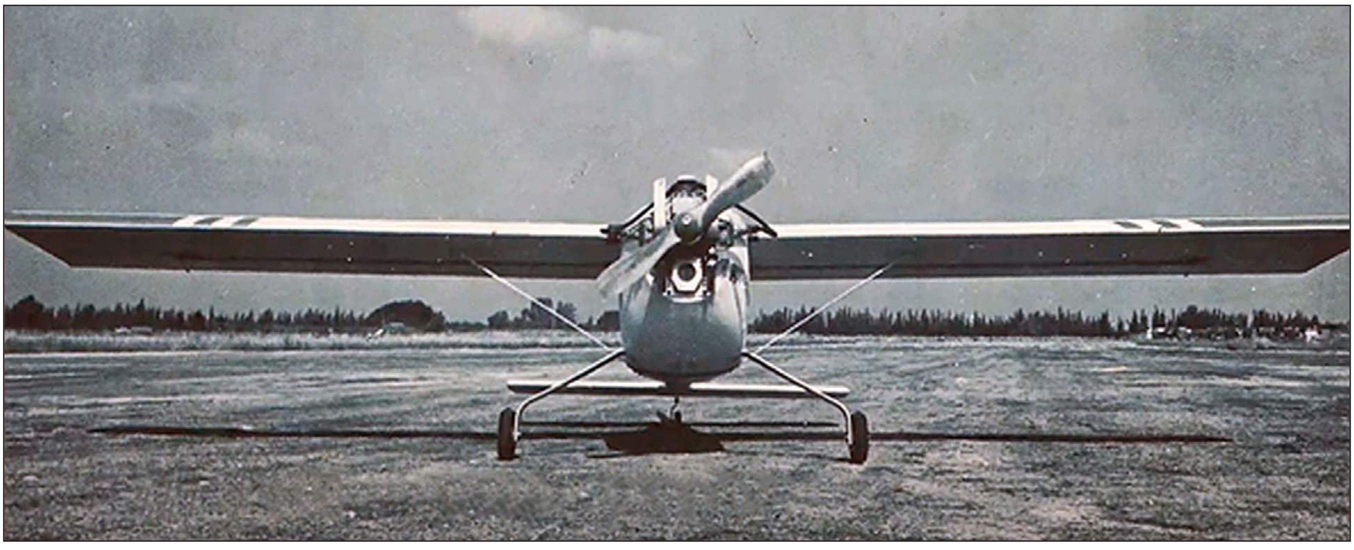
a) Landing of the forces via the sea to take over the key ground of Quasmiyeh, Awali and Bysour
b) Taking over Ramat Nabaliyeh by the divisional force, and connecting to the brigade force via the bridge at Khardale
c) Moving of a division over the seashore route to connect to the landed force and encircle Tyre
d) The divisional force would move from the Nabatiyeh area towards the seashore and join the landed forces
e) Clearing the area of Fatah Land by divisional force and getting ready to enter the Bekaa Valley

deployed for artillery control. Meanwhile, the IDF/AF took care to install a gyro-stabilised telescope on a Dornier Do.27 aircraft of its No. 100 Squadron. This was operated on behalf of the Field Intelligence and Data Collecting Unit, commanded by Yehoshua Tsur.

By the end of 1981, two additional issues cropped up, including a possible cooperation with the Phalange and the necessity of taking over Beirut. Both were researched by a team from Northern Command including Amir Drori, Meir Dagan, and Moshe Tzurich, who paid a visit to the Christian enclave, organised by Mossad. After being flown to Jounieh, they travelled through Lebanon to Beka'a in two cars for 10 days, visiting places like Jebel Barouch and the bridge at Barsi. Later on, a second team made a similar reconnaissance run in the eastern Beirut area.

The last – but not the least – in the chain of Israeli intelligence services was Mossad, headed by Yitzhak 'Haka' Hofi (former commander of Northern Command during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War). For all practical purposes, Mossad essentially 'owned' all the contacts to the Phalange but never controlled it, as often assumed. Ironically, the information provided by Mossad was of little value for the IDF, as it was based on input from Bashir Gemayel, and far from reflected the actual situation. Nevertheless, Begin, Sharon, Eitan and Ben-Gal all relied on it – even once the value of the intelligence provided by Mossad dropped to zero when hostilities commenced.

Above all, not one of the Israeli intelligence services warned about a paramount issue in Lebanon: that of religion. Correspondingly, there was no clarity on the various parties involved in the ongoing civil war and nobody had any kind of clue about how to treat the different parts of the population. Unsurprisingly, from the early hours of 6 June 1982, troops of the IDF found themselves in a dilemma, which they usually 'solved by firepower', thus creating themselves numerous additional enemies in the long run.



Developed by Tadiran Electronic Industries in 1977, the Soreq 2 UAV (better known as the Mastiff Mk 2) was accepted into service in 1979. The Soreq 2 was used by the Nachshon Unit of AMAN and several were handed over to Northern Command during the planning for Operation Peace for Galilee. This small vehicle could carry a payload of 10–15kg for 4–5 hours. In 1983, surviving Soreq 2s were replaced by more capable Mastiff Mk 3s (a.k.a. Soreq 3s). (Udi Brill Collection)

f) Continue to move over the seashore, taking key ground above Beirut and preparing for taking over by a force of two divisions
g) Moving a divisional force from the bridge at Barsi to cut the Beirut–Damascus Highway at Dahr Al-Baydar and be ready to move west to assist in taking over Beirut, or east – to engage Syrian forces in Bekaa
h) Taking over Tyre and Sidon
i) Be ready to attack and destroy Syrian forces in Bekaa by two divisions of the Command
j) Making readiness for defences on the Golan Heights
k) Making readiness in other sections
l) Making readiness to execute the 'Citrus' plan in 48 hours
m) Making readiness to destroy Syrian SAMs

2) Stages

Stage A – From H-24 till H
a) Gathering the forces in organisation areas
b) Calling in required reserve forces
c) Launching the seaborne force
d) Executing aerial and artillery preparations

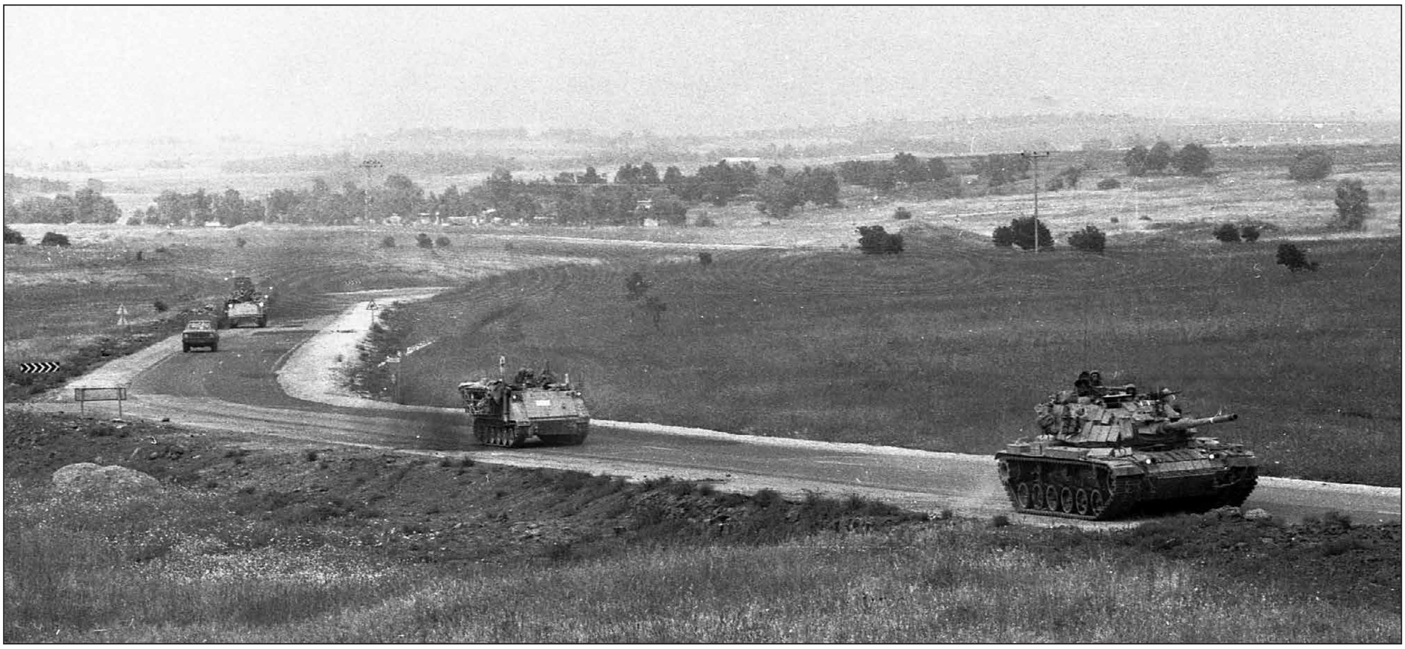
Stage B – from H till H+24
a) Taking over the key ground by airborne and seaborne forces
b) Taking over the area between Litani and Awali
c) Taking over the forward area of Fatah Land
d) Encircling Tyre and Sidon
e) Defence of Golan Heights
f) Calling in reserve duty personnel for the reinforcement of the defences in Central and Southern commands

Stage C – from H+24 till H+48
a) Forces should reach the controlling grounds from south of Beirut
b) Divisional force should reach the Beirut–Damascus Highway at Dahr Al-Baydar
c) Taking over Tyre, Sidon and Nabatiyeh
d) Advance into the Qaraoun Lake area upon the order
e) Clearing the area between Litani and Awali and setting up military authority
f) Maintaining the defence of the Golan Heights and other areas

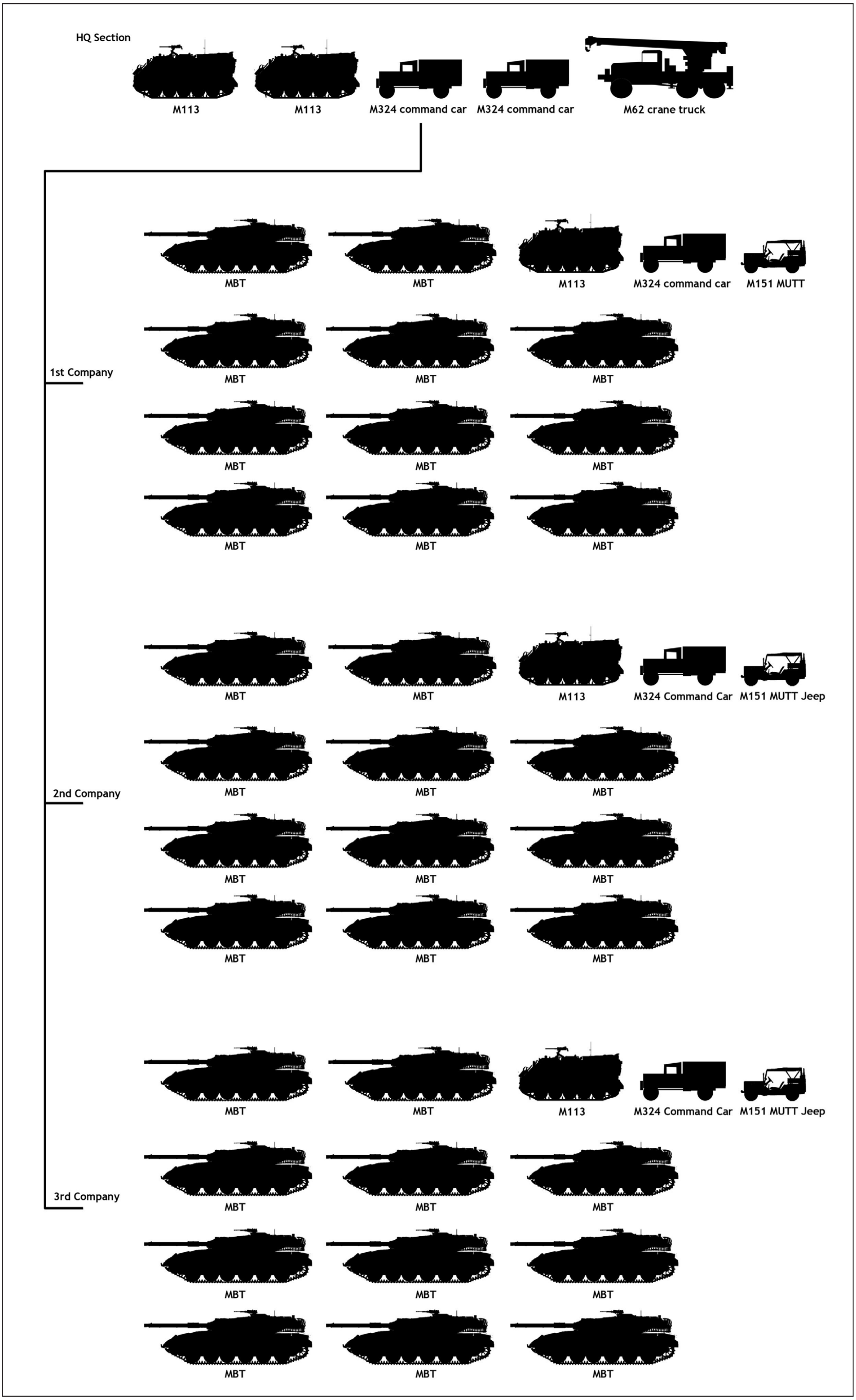
Stage D – from H+48 till H+96
a) Destruction of Syrian forces up to the Beirut–Damascus Highway
b) Linking-up with Christian forces in Beirut
c) Taking over Beirut
d) Setting up military order in taken areas

FORCES AND MISSIONS

- **91st Division** (consisting of the 211th, 828th, and 300th Brigades, later reinforced by the 847th and 939th Brigades): was to advance along the coast, secure Tyre and Sidon, and join the forces of the 35th Paratrooper Brigade at Qusamiyeh, and the 96th Division at Zahrani; furthermore, the 96th was to reach the pass of al-Zahraa at H+24 and be ready to move on Damour and take over the key ground in the Khalde area, and then Beirut International, the morning after.
- **96th Division:** was to make an amphibious landing in the Sidon area, and a heliborne landing in the Bysour area, and then be ready to either enter Sidon or connect with the 211th Brigade and advance on Beirut along the coastal road, along the route Kfar Matta – Qabar Chamoun.
- **36th Division** (consisting of task forces drawn from the 1st and 188th Brigade, and a brigade combat team led by the Deputy Commander of the 1st Golani Infantry Brigade): was to land its 12th Battalion by helicopter in the Habbouch area, cross the Litani River over the bridge at Aquia, and secure Ramat Nabatiyeh through a diversion manoeuvre of the 769th Brigade towards the bridge at Khardale. Subsequently, the 96th was to proceed along the coastal road towards Damour, secure two crossing of the Zahrani River, and prepare to enter western Beirut via the International Airport, Fakahani and Baabda. Finally, the 96th was to be ready to send a force to Dahr al-Baydar, north of the Barsi River, and reach the Beirut–Damascus Highway, or to



IDF armour moving along a road near the border with Lebanon in 1981 or early 1982. (IPPA/National Library of Israel)


HQ Section
M113
M113
M324 command car
M324 command car
M62 crane truck
1st Company
MBT
MBT
M113
M324 command car
M151 MUTT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
2nd Company
MBT
MBT
M113
M324 Command Car
M151 MUTT Jeep
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
MBT
3rd Company
MBT
MBT
M113
M324 Command Car
M151 MUTT Jeep
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This diagram depicts the organisation and equipment of a nominal armoured battalion of the IDF as of 1981–1982. This had a straightforward, relatively simple organisation comprising a headquarters section with minimal technical support capability, and three companies each of 11 tanks and three command and utility vehicles. Battalion commanders did not have their own tanks assigned. (Diagram by Tom Cooper) attack Syrian forces in the Beka'a Valley along the Damour Highway.

- **162nd Division** (consisting of 500th Brigade reinforced by the 932nd Battalion and, probably, 433rd Battalion): initially, this division was to secure the Golan Heights; it was to become involved in Lebanon only on the second day of the operation, by when the decision was to be taken whether to send it into the Beka'a. If so, the 769th Brigade was to enter via Khardale, and advance via Arab Samil along two routes to Barsi, then to Ain Zehalta, and then to Dahr al-Baydar, from where it was to either connect with the Christians north of Beirut, or turn around and attack Beka'a from the north.
- **252nd Division** (consisting of the 14th and 401st Brigades, a reduced battalion of 261st Brigade, and 424th and 931st Battalions): this division was to enter the Fatah Land from two directions: the first wave was to include the infantry of the 424th Brigade and a the battalion of the 261st Brigade, which were to clear the routes for the 14th and 401st Brigades' advance on Minis and Kfar el-Zayt. In the event that Syrian forces were present in the Wadi Cheeba area, Northern Command was to decide about this division's deployment towards the so-called Arafat Route. Subsequently, the 252nd was to advance along the route Ain Aata to Kfar Qouq on the Beirut – Damascus Highway.
- **446th Command** (including the 252nd Division, and, probably, the 162nd Division): this multi-division force was to enter the war at between H+36 and H+40, join the 514th and 623rd Brigades of the 90th Division, find the weakest spot in the Syrian lines and then direct the 252nd Division to this with the aim of reaching the Beirut – Damascus Highway as fast as possible. In support of this advance, the 409th Brigade was to make a heliborne landing at Sahel el-Knaisse, while the 162nd Division was to clear the route between the local villages to enable supply trains to rush on Sultan Yacoub, and then for the 252nd to reach the Beirut – Damascus Highway in the Anjar area. From there, the 446th Command was to prepare for a move on Chtoura and Zahle, or in the direction of Damascus.

Obviously, this was a very ambitious plan and one not supported by everybody in the IDF that had been informed about it. For example, Amir Drori, commander of Northern Command and a thoughtful man who never hid his opinions, considered it to be 'raw and adventuristic'. Indeed, he stressed he could neither understand its aims nor objectives, that there was not enough intelligence to complete it, the troops (especially reservist units) were not ready, and cooperation between different branches of the IDF (especially the air force and the ground forces) was lacking. Finally, he mistrusted Bashir Gemayel, and considered the Phalange to be incompetent and unreliable. However, Drori was also an officer that obeyed his orders and performed in the best possible way. Something similar was true for Emanuel Sakal, commander of the 252nd Division. He could not understand the constant flow of changes in the plan, and considered his division ill-prepared for this operation, his units to be understaffed, and lacking time for necessary training.

Above all, it was the situation of the 446th Command that was anything but simple. During the planning of 1979–1981, this unit was commanded by Moshe 'Brill' Bar-Kochba, and supposed to be a corps-level formation including two or even three armoured division, comprising a mix of active- and reservist units. However, by 1981 Ben-Gal had removed almost all the active units from Bar-Kochba's command, leaving him with the reduced 252nd Division that was spread all over Israel, and the 90th Division that, at that time, existed on paper only. Finally, in 1981, Bar-Kochba was appointed the commander of the 479th Command, the centrepiece of which was the School of Armour. From that point in time onwards, the de-jure commander of the 446th was, actually, Yanush Ben-Gal. However, since he had left for studies in the USA, his place was taken by Yehud Barak, who also acted as the Head of Planning Department.

3

SEARCHING FOR PRETEXT

With planning and preparations already in full swing, through late 1981 and early 1982, Sharon and Eitan set in motion final preparations for an invasion of Lebanon. In late December 1981, after a group of Mossad officials visited the areas controlled by the Phalange – and based on their report – Sharon decided to visit Lebanon. Begin granted approval, and a delegation including Sharon, Moshe Levi (Deputy Chie-of-Staff, IDF), Saguy and a few other civilian and military officials, was flown by a helicopter to Lebanon, late on 12 January 1982. Immediately afterwards, they began searching for a pretext to attack.

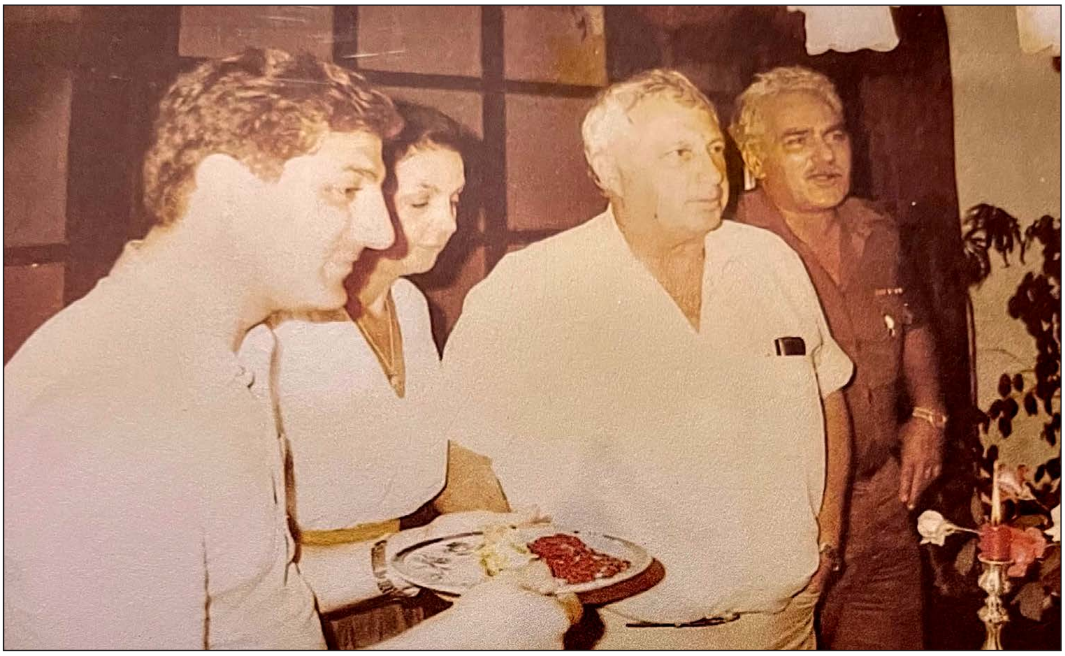
ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE PHALANGE[1]

During his meeting with Bashir Gemayel, Sharon conveyed several points:

- the IDF would launch a massive operation against the PLO, but this would not be connected to the relations between the Phalange and Palestinians: the intention was to eliminate the threat to Israeli settlements in Galilee
- there was no planning to fight the Syrians unless they chose to become involved
- the IDF was ready to assist the Phalange but would not fight for them: Lebanese Christians had to pave the way for themselves
- the IDF was not to enter Beirut under any conditions: Phalange was to clear the western side of the city on its own

That said, while meeting several Christian political leaders – including Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun – Sharon provided no specific details: no dateline, no directions, no places. On the contrary, he stressed that the operation might start in a few days, or in a few weeks, and that this would depend on different conditions, including the urgency or the pretext. However, much to the surprise of the Mossad operatives present – who knew that the AMAN assessed the Phalange as 'incapable, unreliable, and uncontrollable' – he went on to explain that there would be an IDF advance into Lebanon: for the first time ever, the Israeli intentions were revealed to somebody outside the country. From that point onwards, the secrecy of the operation was compromised, for it was no secret for anybody involved.

For his part, Bashir Gemayel proved very excited about the pending invasion and considered it an excellent opportunity to get rid not only of the Palestinians, but also of the Syrians: he stressed that his forces were capable of doing the job but would not fight together with the Israelis in order not to jeopardise relations with other Arab governments. That said, Bashir opposed Sharon's plan



Bashir Gemayel (first from the left), Ariel Sharon with his wife Lil, and Yehoshua Saguy (first from the right), during one of their meetings in January 1982. (IDF)

for Operation Citrus – an IDF landing in the Jounieh area, with the intention of advancing on Beirut from the north: in his opinion, a massive presence of Israeli troops within the Christian enclave would be a bad idea.

After this meeting, the exchange between Israel and Phalange went on for several months longer, mainly in the form of visits by top Israeli officials to Jounieh, and Bahsir to Tel Aviv. For example, on 23 January 1982, Rafael Eitan visited Bashir and was met with full military honours, including a parade. Unimpressed, Eitan demanded to be taken to West Beirut: although an idea fiercely opposed by the Mossad people escorting him, Eitan was not the sort of person to easily surrender to the circumstances. After several tough discussions, he was taken to a tall building in the city centre.

During two visits to Israel, in February and April 1982, Bashir – together with Fadi Frem, his director of intelligence – expressed his concerns about the coming operation. His biggest worry was that the IDF would stop before reaching Beirut. Therefore, he attempted to obtain Sharon's commitment not only for the Lebanese capital, but against the Syrian troops in the country. Convinced that the Phalange was playing its own game, Sharon offered that the IDF would take part in securing the Beirut–Damascus Highway, but Bashir rejected. Nevertheless, cooperation was continued because Begin still liked Bashir, considered him a 'friend of Israel', and supported his message of a 'Christian genocide'. Eventually, Sharon concluded:

> …and I found him to be a firm and confident man. His words showed great conviction and dominance, about a man who had previously demonstrated his leadership talents. But, there was someone who was telling me that I would not be able to form a clearer idea of this character unless I went to his house, met his men in their homes and among their families, and if I took a tour of Christian sites, only then will I be able to comprehend him and appreciate the aspects of his movement.

Whether Sharon's worlds came out of the heart or if they were meant cynically remains unknown. What can be said for sure is that Bashir Gemayel never considered Israel as a friend of the heart, but an ally of necessity.

GEARING UP

Following several terrorist attacks against Israeli interests abroad, in April 1982 the IDF was put in a state of high readiness under the plan codenamed 'Fathers' Deeds'. On the 4th of that month, Begin and Sharon proposed air strikes on five Palestinian bases in Lebanon: this was approved by the cabinet but did not materialise due to bad weather. Ministers met again a week later, but – in a separate vote for each target – could not agree what was to be hit. Eventually, only three targets were chosen and the IDF/AF was ordered to fly the strike on 21 April, pending final approval.

On that day, a jeep with two Israeli soldiers of the Artillery School, underway along the Litani River, hit a mine near Tayybah, killing an officer and wounding a soldier. The investigation failed to find a direct connection to the PLO but Begin and Sharon exploited the opportunity to order the IDF/AF into 'retaliation strikes'. A multi-formation operation was launched to bomb PLO bases in Tyre, Douha, Mazdoud, and Damour: the latter was hit by at least a dozen fighter-bombers, reportedly killing 20 and wounding 60 Palestinians. According to the Israelis, the presence of so many of their aircraft prompted the Syrians to scramble their interceptors and two 'MiG-23s' were claimed as shot down by AIM-9L Sidewinders fired by two F-16As from No. 117 Squadron, piloted by Hagai Katz and Ze'ev Raz.

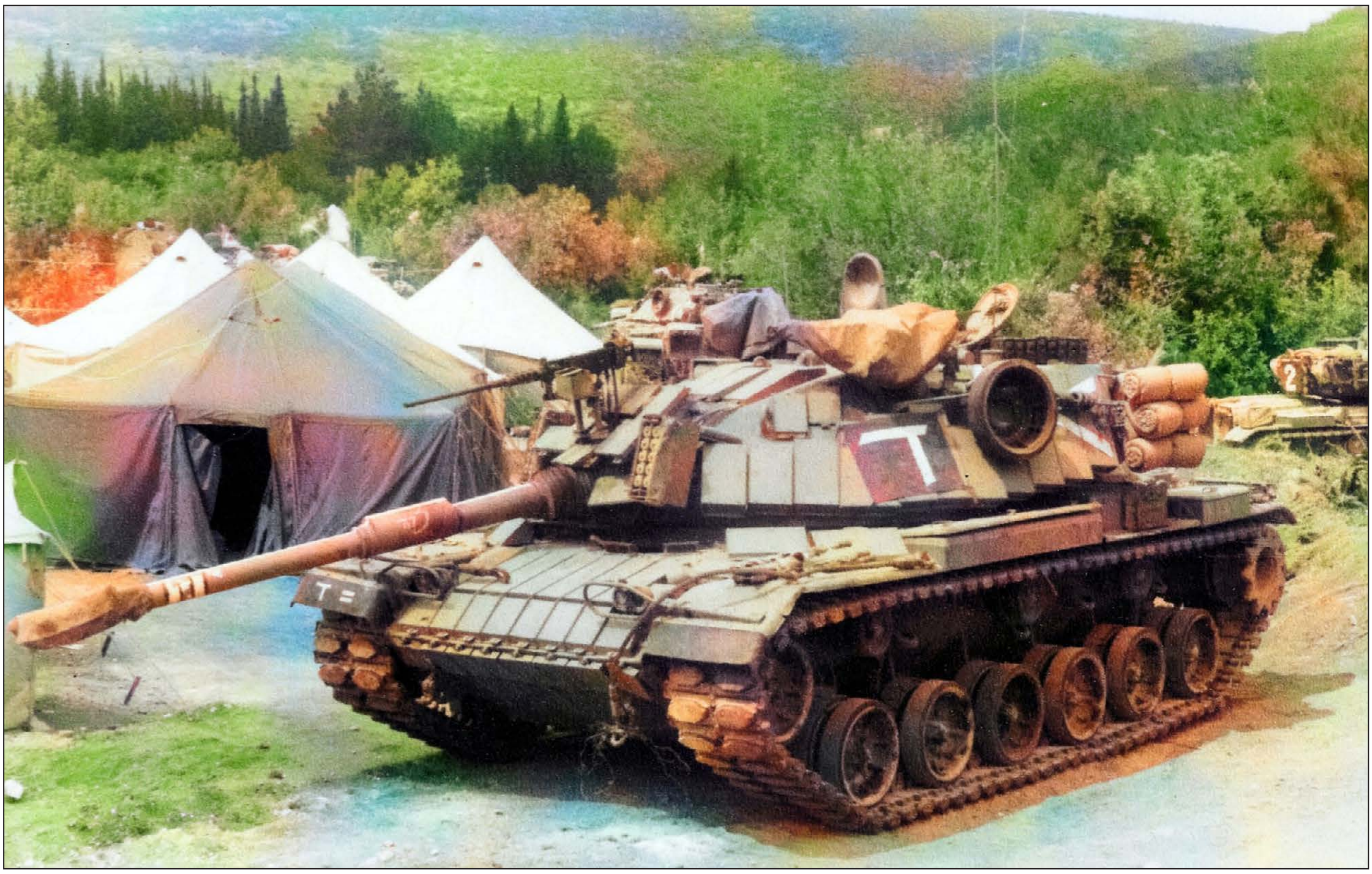
On 2 May 1982, Sharon initiated Operation Wooden Sling, within which the IDF increased its state of alert from 72 hours to 24 hours and redeployed about 360 main battle tanks (MBTs), 100 artillery pieces, and two infantry brigades from the Golan Heights to the border with Lebanon. A week later, on 9 May, the cabinet then approved another air strike on PLO bases near Zahrani, Damour and Sidon. This time, the PLO did retaliate and around 100 shells hit Israel without causing injuries or material damage. Of course, this worked straight into the hands of Begin, Sharon and Eitan, even more so when, on 14 May 1982, Yasser Arafat announced that the PLO did not feel obliged to follow the ceasefire agreement of the previous year.

By this time, Sharon was already offering Operation Pines to the cabinet, but the decision was repeatedly postponed until 16 May 1982, when Sharon and Eitan presented an entirely new plan: Operation Peace for Galilee. This considered a 'limited' action of pushing the PLO 40 kilometres away from the border within a timeframe of 24–48 hours. While largely in agreement with the plot, this time the cabinet began wondering about possible Syrian interference: Sharon responded that this was very likely but that the IDF would be ready to combat the Syrian forces deployed in Lebanon. Eitan supported this conclusion, adding that the Syrians had already interfered – 'at least in the air'. Furthermore, ministers wanted to know if the IDF had a solution for driving the Palestinian M-46 130mm guns beyond the range where they could hit Israel, in the light of the Syrian SAM sites in the Beka'a Valley. Sharon refused to address this issue. Instead, Begin then sent a message to the US

Rafael Eitan (seated, fifth from the left, in uniform), Gemayel (centre, in civilian clothes), and Sharon, in Sharon’s office in early 1982. (Bashir Gemayel Foundation)

Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, announcing Israel’s intention to launch a military operation in Lebanon. As so often, the American responded in positive-negative manner, in reaction to which Sharon paid a visit to Washington DC, before – together with Eitan – conducting several rallies to promote the idea of a military solution to the ‘Palestinian problem in Lebanon’ at home.

On 25 May, Israeli jets overflew Syrian SAM sites in Beka’a provoking another air combat with the SyAAF: this time, two MiG-21s were claimed shot down by Amos Mohar from No. 110 Squadron. During the related press conference, Eitan was demonstratively unimpressed about engaging Syrian interceptors. On the contrary, he described air combat with the Syrian as a kind of common occurrence: ‘…we shot down two on 21 April, we shot down more of them before, and they did not respond’. Furthermore, he announced that Israel would not cease its activities over Lebanon, no matter what. UNIFIL confirmed this, reporting that throughout early 1982, Israel conducted a series of provocative actions in southern Lebanon, including the sinking of several fishing boats inside Lebanese territorial waters, and through conducting ‘intensive, excessive, and provocative’ military exercises in cooperation with Haddad’s forces. Overall, between August 1981 and May 1982, the UN troops recorded 2,125 Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace and 652 violations of Lebanese territorial waters. Throughout this time, the Israeli press was reporting the possibility of an upcoming military operation almost daily: war was now in the air, Begin, Sharon, and Eitan were only searching for an excuse to launch it.



A Magach-6B MBT of Z Company, 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade, IDF, seen on the Golan Heights in early 1982. The 211th Brigade was originally assigned to the 162nd Division, homebased in the Jordan River Valley: it was deployed to bolster Northern Command during one of many high readiness states of 1981–1982. Z Company traded its Magach-6Bs for Merkava Mk 1s shortly before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. (Photo by Ilan Friedland)

ANYTHING GOES[2]

Late in the evening of 3 June 1982, three – possibly four – men approached Sholomo Argov, Israeli Ambassador to Great Britain, as he was about to get into his car after a banquet at the Dorchester Hotel, in Park Lane, London. One of the men, Hussein Ghassan Said, then shot Argov in the head using a WZ63 machine pistol.

The attack caused frantic activity by the Mossad, the Security Service of Israel, and AMAN, and in a matter of hours it became clear that the assassination was a deed of the Abu Nidal Organisation (ANO) – which was not only hostile to the PLO, but had made several attempts to assassinate Arafat too. Indeed, they quickly found out that the attack on Argov was carried out on order of the Iraqi Intelligence Service and that afterwards the assassins drove to the Iraqi Embassy and deposited the weapon there. Nothing of this mattered to Begin any more: he set up a meeting of his cabinet and, acing unusually aggressively, accepted no arguments. When Eitan offered the idea of air strikes on 11 targets, the government not only agreed, but Begin went as far as to stress they must be ready for 'further developments' – in the form of Operation Peace for Galilee, should the PLO respond.

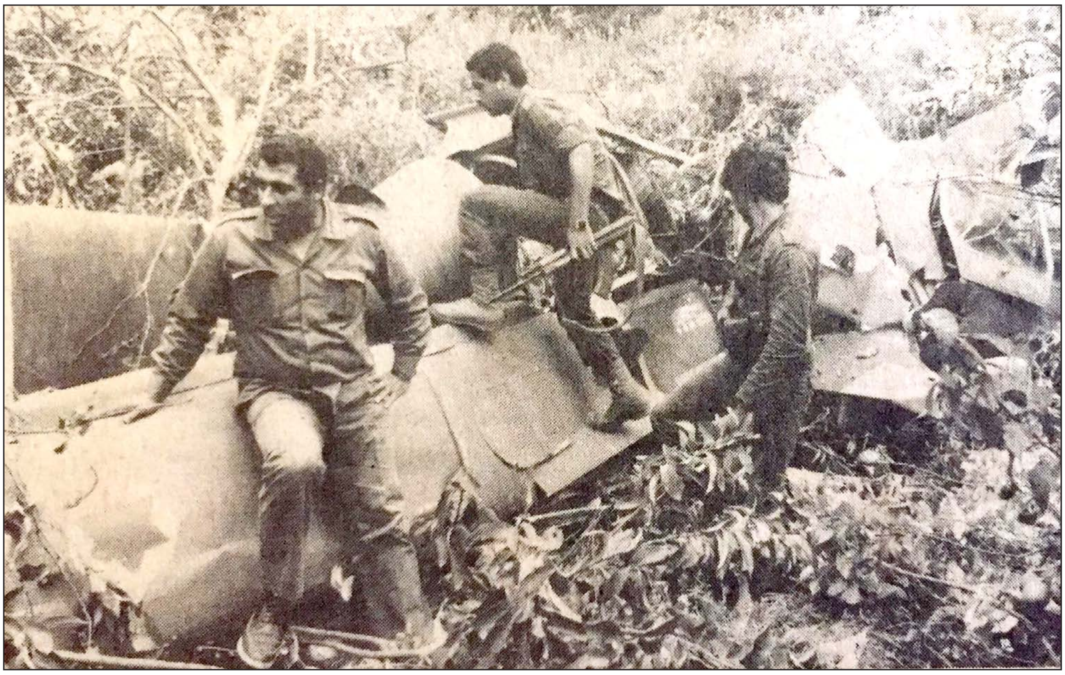
Back to his office at the General Headquarters of the IDF, Eitan then gathered his top brass to discuss the timeline and options. Brushing aside Saguy's warning of Palestinian retaliation, he was sure that the government would approve Operation Peace for Galilee, but not yet certain if this would be launched on Sunday 6 June with the forces already deployed to the starting positions, or on Tuesday 8 June, by when all the necessary forces would be in place. Drori cautioned that it would be better to wait, but Eitan, concerned about political complications in the event of another delay, was sure they could do with less. By now, nobody within the top ranks of the IDF had any doubts: there would be a war. It was only uncertain when.

A Kfir C.2 fighter-bomber of the IDF/AF (silhouette visible in the upper left corner) seen attacking targets in the hills at Doha on 5 June 1982. (Efim Sandler Collection)

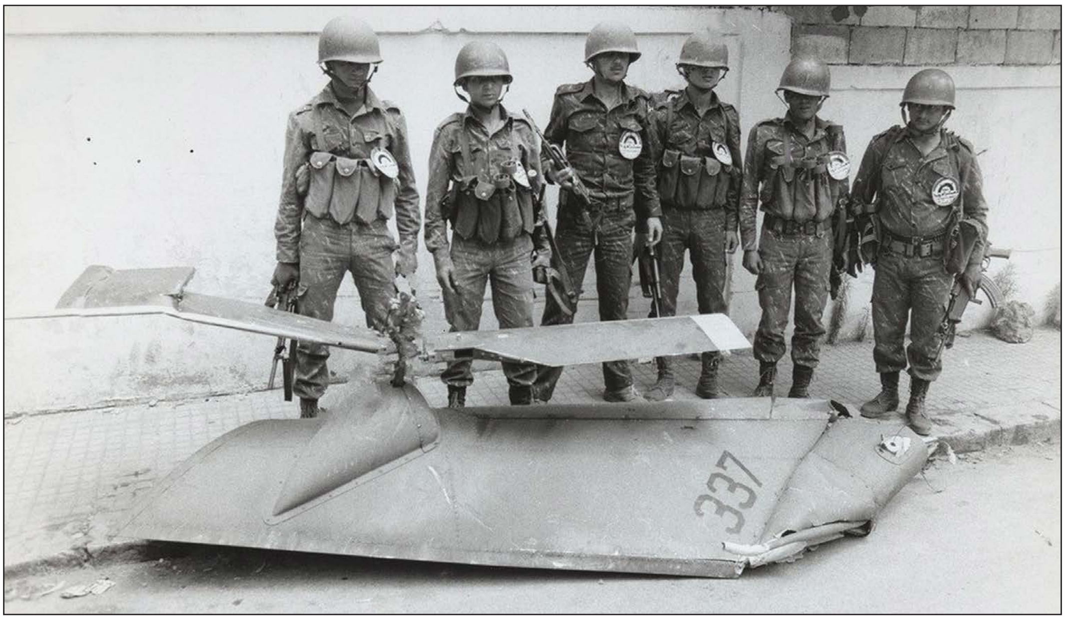
The result of an Israeli air strike on Khalde on 5 June 1982. (Efim Sandler Collection)

PREPARATORY STRIKES[3]

Around 1515hrs of 4 June 1982, the IDF/AF bombed Palestinian bases in two locations in the Beirut area – in Burj el-Barajneh and in the Sport City – killing 60 and wounding more than 270. In reaction to a clear provocation, the Palestinians began 'retaliating' between 1645 and 1730hrs, with artillery fire against Major Haddad's enclave in the south, and some of the northernmost places in Israel: on that and the following day, the Palestinians hit 23 Israeli settlements with about 500 artillery shells and rockets, killing two, wounding 15, and causing significant damage to property.[4] Ordered to silence the guns,



The crash site of the AH-1S Cobra shot down by antiaircraft fire near Sidon on 5 June 1982. According to the official IDF/AF investigation, the helicopter belonged to a pair sent to the area to replace two Cobras returning to base. Serial number 337 disappeared and ceased to respond to radio calls, but a search and rescue operation could not be launched due to heavy ground fire. It was only the next day that the IDF was able to find out what had happened and declare the crew of two as missing in action. (Jamal Itani Collection)



Combatants of the pro-Syria as-Sa'iqa militia with the rearmost part of the boom and the fin of the AH-1S Cobra serial number 337 from No. 160 Squadron, IDF, shot down in the Sidon area on 5 June 1982. Both crewmembers, Yossi Weksler and Amichai Spector, were killed. (via Jamal Itani)

the IDF/AF reacted by scrambling four-ships of A-4 Skyhawks, most of which were directed to hit the M-46 130mm guns in the Nabatiyah area. Fighter-bombers encountered fierce antiaircraft fire and missed most of their targets, because of which another attack wave – including A-4s from Nos. 115 and 140 Squadrons – was launched between 1720 and 1725hrs, and yet another at 1840. The onslaught went on through the night, by when Skyhawks began deploying flares to make targets visible for attack helicopters: by the morning a total of 22 fortifications, gun emplacements, and roads had been attacked.

With the Begin government thus finding the pretext it had been searching for for months, from that moment onwards the die was cast: the IDF began working in 'war mode': all leave for active personnel was cancelled, and a mobilisation of reservists initiated. The Head of Operations, Uri Saguy, then approved additional air strikes for the next day, and for the first mechanised and infantry units of the IDF to enter Haddad's enclave: in his opinion, the best time for the start of operation would have been the evening of Monday 7 June. On the contrary, certain that the forces redeployed from the Golan Heights were sufficient, Eitan wanted to start at noon of Sunday, right after receiving cabinet approval. For him, it was imperative to reach the Zahrani River in the west, and the Litani River in the east before the USA could react, and thus establish a *fait accompli*.

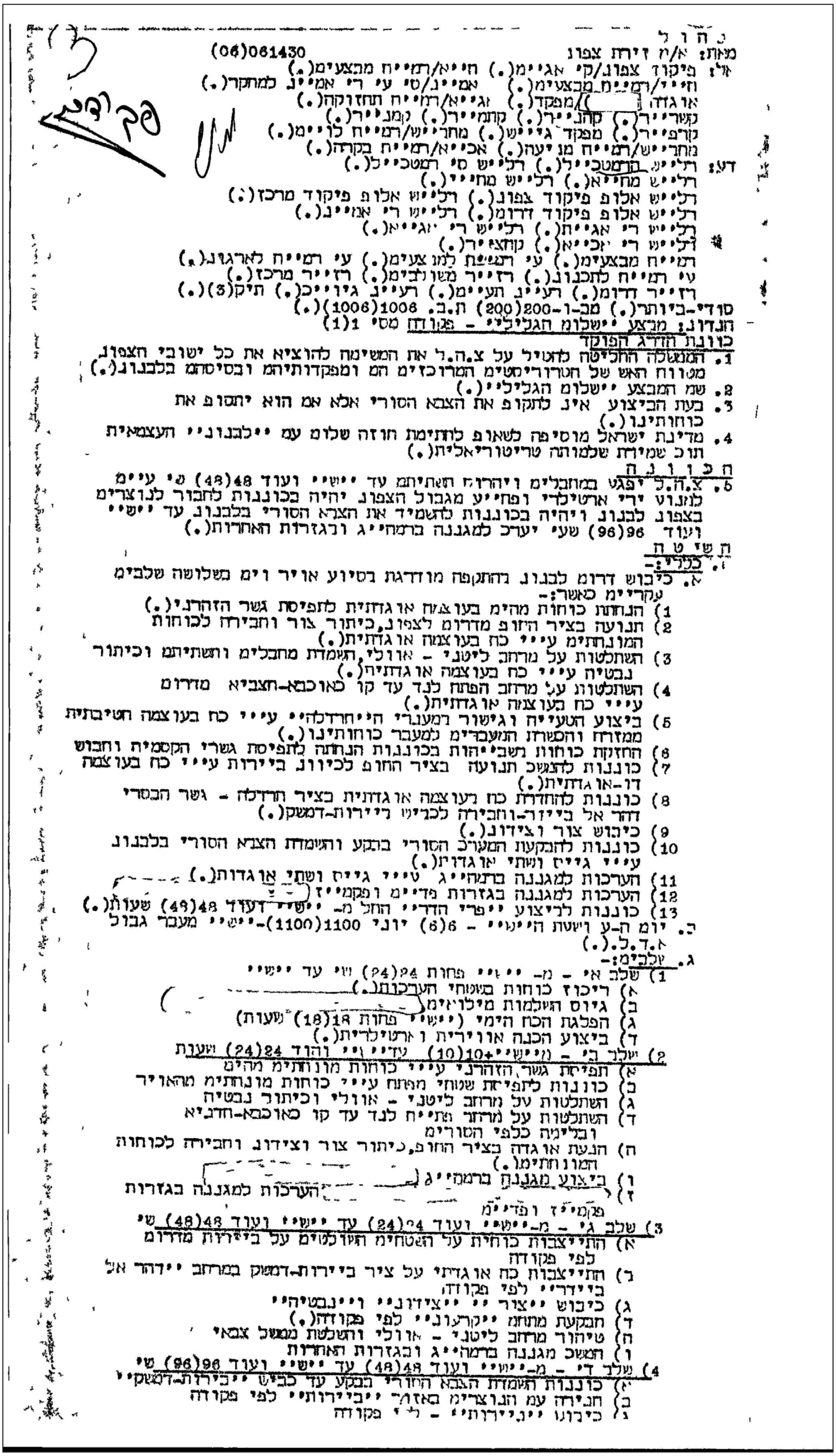
Artillery duels between various Palestinian factions, the IDF, and Haddad's South Lebanon Army raged through the night from Friday to Saturday before, early on 5 June, David Ivry, Commander of the Israel Defence Force/Air Force, presented a list of four groups of targets to the cabinet, with a request for the decision on when to attack. After some discussions, the government granted permission for air strikes on all of them. The sole exception was bases within populated areas, from which nobody was firing upon the Israelis: actually, this mean that Ivry was free to hit whatever he wanted to hit. Shortly after, during a meeting in the General Headquarters, Eitan and his aides took a decision to organise the ground advance as follows:

- 91st Division was to control the 211th and 828th Brigades
- 36th Division was to control the 1st and 188th Brigades
- 252nd Division was to control the 261st and 401st Brigades

The 162nd Division was to act as a backup, while the 49th Division was to be mobilised on Saturday, followed by the 131st Division on Sunday: the two were to assume the task of securing the Golan Heights.

By this time, the first Israeli ground forces were already well inside Lebanon: a tank company each from the 211th and the 188th Brigades had taken positions near Sheik el-Hordan and Marjayoun, and begun engaging targets north of the UNIFIL zone, respectively. Amongst others, the latter destroyed a T-34/85 of the PLO in the Demachqiye area.

The IDF/AF followed in multiple waves during the day: a total of 155 aircraft hammered no fewer than 55 targets in southern Lebanon, the Chouf mountains, Beirut and western Beka'a. Moreover, warships of the IDF/Sea Corps shelled numerous targets along the coast from Tyre to Khale. The mass of air strikes proved imprecise: several of the M-46s positioned in well-protected emplacements in the Nabatiyah area survived up to three or four attacks by four fighter-bombers each. One reason was that, contrary to official Israeli releases that bragged of the deployment of so-called 'precision guided ammunition' (PGMs), the IDF/AF was almost exclusively deploying unguided weapons – mainly US-made Mk.82 500lb (250kg) bombs, and unguided 68mm rockets fired from LAU-3 pods. The latter were particularly imprecise: A-4s regularly deployed them in the 'salvo' mode where pilots would fire up to 95 rockets from a total five pods at once. While resulting in a spectacular sight, they literally sprayed the munitions over a large area, and proved extremely dangerous for civilians. Unsurprisingly, over 100 Lebanese were killed by Israeli bombs and rockets that day, and more than 300 wounded. In return, the IDF/AF suffered its first confirmed combat loss since 1974 when Bell AH-1S Cobra attack helicopter serial number 337, from No. 160 Squadron, was shot down by ground fire near the Zahrani River, halfway between Sidon and Nabatiyah. The crew – Yossi Weksler and Amichai Spector – was declared missing in action, but quite soon it became obvious that they had been killed and their



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מאת: א/ח זירת צפון (06)061430

אל: פיקוד צפון/קי אג"ם(.) ח"א/רמ"ח מבצעים(.)
ח"י/רמ"ח מבצעים(.) אמ"ן/ס' ע' ר' אמ"ן למחקר(.)
אוגדה [redacted]/מפקד(.) זג"א/רמ"ח תחזוקה(.)
קשר"ר(.) קהנ"ר(.) קתמ"ר(.) קמנ"ר(.)
קרפ"ר(.) מפקד גי"ש(.) מחרי"ש/רמ"ח לו"ם(.)
מחרי"ש/רמ"ח מניעה(.) אכ"א/רמ"ח בקרה(.)

דע: רל"ש הרמטכ"ל(.) רל"ש ס' רמטכ"ל(.)
רל"ש מח"א(.) רל"ש מח"י(.)
רל"ש אלוף פיקוד צפון(.) רל"ש אלוף פיקוד מרכז(.)
רל"ש אלוף פיקוד דרום(.) רל"ש ר' אמ"ן(.)
רל"ש ר' אג"ת(.) רל"ש ר' זג"א(.)
רל"ש ר' זכ"א(.) קחצ"ר(.)
רמ"ח מבצעים(.) ע' רמ"ח למבצעים(.) ע' רמ"ח לארגון(.)
ע' רמ"ח לתכנון(.) רז"ר משולבים(.) רז"ר מרכז(.)
רז"ר דרום(.) רע"ן תע"מ(.) רע"ן גיו"כ(.) תיק(3)(.)

סודי-ביותר(.) מב-1-200(200) ת.ב. 1006(1006)(.)

הנדון: מבצע "שלום הגליל" - פקודה מס' 1(1)

כוונת הדרג הפוקד

1. הממשלה החליטה להטיל על צה"ל את המשימה להוציא את כל ישובי הצפון, מטווח האש של הטרוריסטים המרוכזים הם ומפקדותיהם ובסיסיהם בלבנון(.)
2. שם המבצע "שלום הגליל"(.)
3. בעת הביצוע אין לתקוף את הצבא הסורי אלא אם הוא יתקוף את כוחותינו(.)
4. מדינת ישראל מוסיפה לשאוף לחתימת חוזה שלום עם "לבנון" העצמאית תוך שמירת שלמותה טריטוריאלית(.)

ה כ ו ו נ ה

5. צה"ל יפגע במחבלים ויהרוס תשתיתם עד "ש" ועוד 48(48) ש' ע"מ למנוע ירי ארטילרי ומח"ע מגבול הצפון יהיה בכוננות לחבור לנוצרים בצפון לבנון ויהיה בכוננות להשמיד את הצבא הסורי בלבנון עד "ש" ועוד 96(96) שע' יערך למגננה ברמה"ג ובגזרות האחרות(.)

ה ש י ט ה

6. כללי:-

א. כיבוש דרום לבנון בהתקפה מודרגת בסיוע אויר וים בשלושה שלבים עקריים כאשר:-
1) הנחתת כוחות מהים בעוצמה אוגדתית לתפיסת גשר הזהרני(.)
2) תנועה בציר החוף מדרום לצפון, כיתור צור וחבירה לכוחות המונחתים ע"י כח בעוצמה אוגדתית(.)
3) השתלטות על מרחב ליטני - אורלי, השמדת מחבלים ותשתיתם וכיתור נבטיה ע"י כח בעוצמה אוגדתית(.)
4) השתלטות על מרחב הפתח לנד עד קו כאוכבא-חצביא מדרום ע"י כח בעוצמה אוגדתית(.)
5) ביצוע הטעיה וגישור במעברי "החרדלה" ע"י כח בעוצמה חטיבתית ממזרח והכשרת המעברים למעבר כוחותינו(.)
6) החזקת כוחות בשביתות בכוננות הנחתה לתפיסת גשרי הקסמיה וחבוש
7) כוננות להמשך תנועה בציר החוף לכיוון ביירות ע"י כח בעוצמת דו-אוגדתית(.)
8) כוננות להחדרת כח בעוצמה אוגדתית בציר החרדלה - גשר הבסרי דהר אל ביידר-וחבירה לכביש ביירות-דמשק(.)
9) כיבוש צור וצידון(.)
10) כוננות להבקעת המערך הסורי בבקע והשמדת הצבא הסורי בלבנון ע"י גי"ס ושתי אוגדות(.)
11) הערכות למגננה ברמה"ג ע"י גי"ס ושתי אוגדות(.)
12) הערכות למגננה בגזרות פד"ים ופקמ"ז
13) כוננות לביצוע "פרי הדר" החל מ- "ש" ועוד 48(48) שעות(.)

ב. יום ה-ע ושעת ה"ש" - 6(6) יוני 1100(1100)-"ש" מעבר גבול א.ד.ל.(.)

ג. שלבים:-
1) שלב א' - מ- "ש" פחות 24(24) ש' עד "ש"
   א) ריכוז כוחות בשטחי הערכות(.)
   ב) גיוס השלמות מילואים
   ג) הפלגת הכח הימי ("ש" פחות 18(18) שעות)
   ד) ביצוע הכנה אווירית וארטילרית(.)
2) שלב ב' - מ"ש"+10(10) עד "ש" ועוד 24(24) שעות
   א) תפיסת גשר הזהרני ע"י כוחות מונחתים מהים
   ב) כוננות לתפיסת שטחי מפתח ע"י כוחות מונחתים מהאויר
   ג) השתלטות על מרחב ליטני - אורלי וכיתור נבטיה
   ד) השתלטות על מרחב פת"ח לנד עד קו כאוכבא-חצביא ובלימה כלפי הסורים
   ה) הנעת אוגדה בציר החוף, כיתור צור וצידון וחבירה לכוחות המונחתים(.)
   ו) ביצוע מגננה ברמה"ג
   ז) הערכות למגננה בגזרות פקמ"ז ופד"ים
3) שלב ג' - מ-"ש" ועוד 24(24) עד "ש" ועוד 48(48) ש'
   א) התייצבות כוחית על השטחים השולטים על ביירות מדרום לפי פקודה
   ב) התייצבות כח אוגדתי על ציר ביירות-דמשק במרחב "דהר אל ביידר" לפי פקודה
   ג) כיבוש "צור" "צידון" ו"נבטיה"
   ד) הבקעת מתחם "קרעון" לפי פקודה(.)
   ה) טיהור מרחב ליטני - אורלי והשלטת ממשל צבאי
   ו) המשך מגננה ברמה"ג ובגזרות האחרות
4) שלב ד' - מ-"ש" ועוד 48(48) עד "ש" ועוד 96(96) ש'
   א) כוננות השמדת הצבא הסורי בבקע עד כביש "ביירות-דמשק"
   ב) חבירה עם הנוצרים באזור "ביירות" לפי פקודה
   ג) כיבוש "ביירות" - לפי פקודה

A copy of the final *Order for Operation Peace for Galilee*, as issued on 6 June 1982. Of interest is the mention of additional stages – from H+24 to H+48 and H+96 hours – contrary to what Sharon announced to Begin's ministers. Another point of interest is that the H-hour of 1100hrs was set for crossing of the 'border' between Haddad's enclave and the UNIFIL-controlled area, not for the crossing of the border between Israel and Lebanon. (IDF)

Magach tanks of the IDF during one of many exercises on the Golan Heights in 1982. (IPPA/National Library of Israel)

bodies taken away by Palestinians. For all practical purposes, the war thus began well before it was officially sanctioned by the Israeli government: about 30 hours before the usual story about 'Israeli tanks crossing the fence to Lebanon'.

LAST MINUTE REFINEMENTS[5]

Late in the afternoon of 5 June 1982, Uri Saguy briefed the top IDF commanders on the details of the pending operation. He noted that this was planned to last more than 48 hours, 'as there are some issues to take care of that might take longer'. Immediately after, IDF troops began pouring into southern Lebanon, as elements of the 1st Golani Infantry Brigade, 7th Armoured Brigade, 55th, 402nd, 403rd, and 404th Artillery Battalions, 601st Engineer Battalion and many others crossed the border – without this ever being mentioned to Begin's cabinet. The 'excuse' for this blatant violation of an international border was that Major Haddad declared the Free Lebanese State back in 1979, and this was 'widely accepted as Israel-controlled' within the top brass of the IDF.

It was only during the night from 5 to 6 June 1982, that Ariel Sharon presented the plan for Operation Peace for Galilee to Begin's cabinet. According to him, this was planned to last up to 24 hours, and result in forcing the Palestinian artillery 40 kilometres away from Israel. As expected, at least by Sharon, the only person who challenged his assumptions was Mordechai Tzipori. A retired general and former brigade commander, Tzipori was the sole minister with any kind of serious military experience. Keeping him isolated from military affairs, Begin appointed him the Minister of Communications. However, now, Tzipori demanded a better explanation of the plan, and started asking 'unpleasant questions' – at least until stopped by Begin. Silenced, the cabinet approved Operation Peace for Galilee, setting the starting point – i.e. the time at which the IDF would cross the border – as 1200hrs on 6 June.

By the morning of 6 June, the IDF had three divisions, including about a dozen brigades, deployed well inside Lebanon. With this movement developing faster than expected, Sharon requested that Begin change the timing of attack from 1200 to 1100hrs. The chancellor granted his approval. Around the same time, the General Headquarters of the IDF got on with fighting the war on its own and issued the former order for Operation Peace for Galilee: right from the start, this was announced as lasting 96 rather than 48 hours and was far removed from what was approved by the cabinet.

4

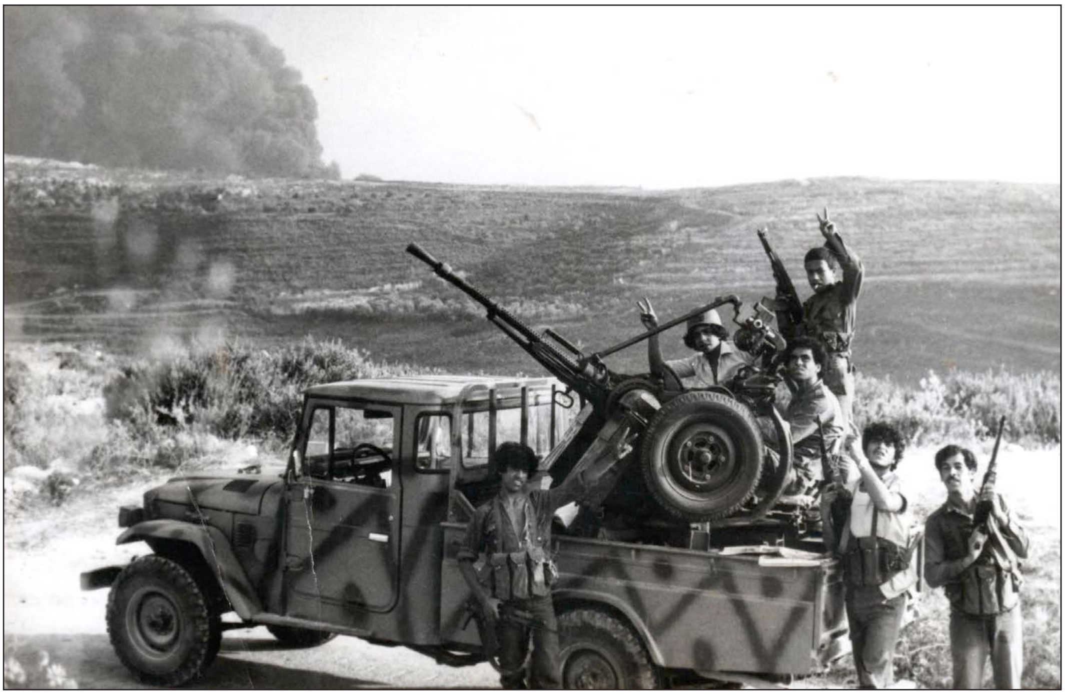
PALESTINIAN AND ALLIED FORCES

The Israeli intention to invade Lebanon became obvious to almost everybody in the country – and especially the PLO – during the summer of 1981, well before Sharon informed Bashir. Some intelligence acquired by the Palestinians was little more than rumours and hearsay, and much was based on reports in the Western press but in grand total it was more than enough for Yasser Arafat to realise that a big war was looming. Unsurprisingly, he initiated comprehensive preparations.[1]

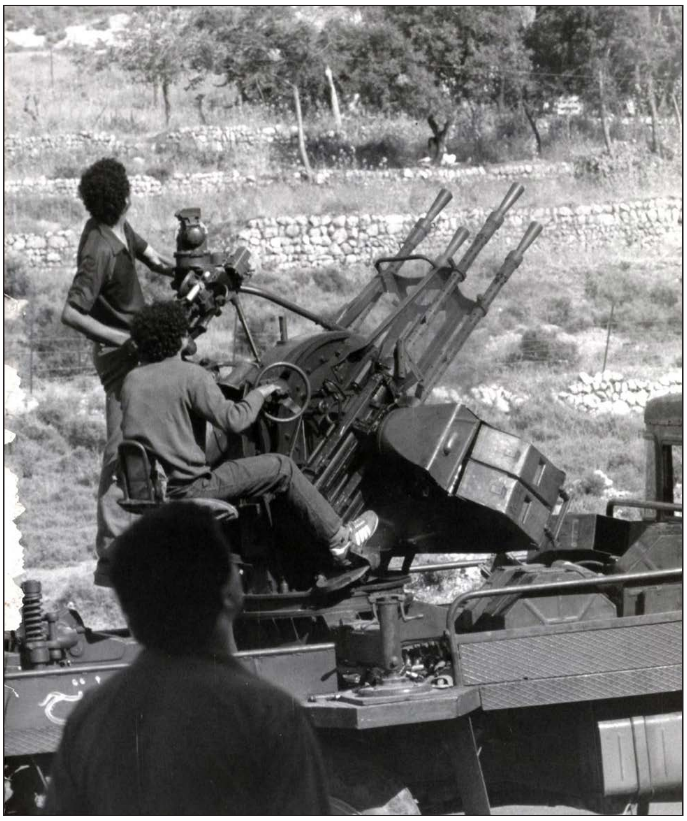
PLO REARMAMENT

In September 1981, Arafat not only put his forces on alert but also sent the Chief-of-Staff of Fatah, Saad Sayil, to Moscow. Sayil confronted the Soviet leadership with a request for 9K52 Luna-M (ASCC/NATO codename 'FROG-7') surface-to-surface rockets with a range of 65km, and 2K12 Kub (ASCC/NATO codename 'SA-6 Gainful') surface-to-air missiles. Contrary to the USA, where there was no understanding at all for the situation in the Middle East, and matters were viewed purely through the prism of the Cold War – which Israel opportunistically exploited to arm the IDF into one of the biggest conventional armed forces in the world during the 1970s – the Soviets proved not only cautious, but indeed restrained. Moscow flatly refused to provide anything other than light firearms and ammunition. Sayil then travelled to Libya, where Qaddaffi proved more responsive: however, for unknown reasons his promise to deliver FROGs never materialised. Instead, through the autumn of 1981 Libya provided a handful of BRDM-2 armoured reconnaissance cars, BTR-60 armoured personnel carriers (APCs), a number of D-30 towed 122mm howitzers, and a few M-46 130mm guns.

Meanwhile, other PLO delegations visited no fewer than 14 countries with requests for support. In most cases, the responses were lukewarm. In September 1981, East Germany delivered four ZSU-23-4 Shilka self-propelled 23mm antiaircraft guns, famous for their performance in the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. However,



A PLO-operated ZPU-1 14.5mm heavy machine gun mounted on a Toyota Land Cruiser during the Two Week War of July 1981. (Jamal Itani Collection)



A ZPU-4 14.5mm antiaircraft machine gun, mounted on the flatbed of an Unimog truck in Khalde on 6 June 1982. Palestinian antiaircraft defences consisted of truck-mounted DShK or ZPU machine guns, or ZU-23-2 light automatic 23mm guns. (Jamal Itani Collection)

it never trained the Palestinians in how to use its fire control radar. In March 1982, South Yemen provided six obsolete KS-19 100mm antiaircraft guns: connected to a fire control radar, the PLO deployed them for coastal defence. Finally, North Korea provided about a dozen modified BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, and a number of towed 107mm MRLs, while China supplied 24 120mm and 160mm mortars, plus additional 37mm and 57mm antiaircraft guns.

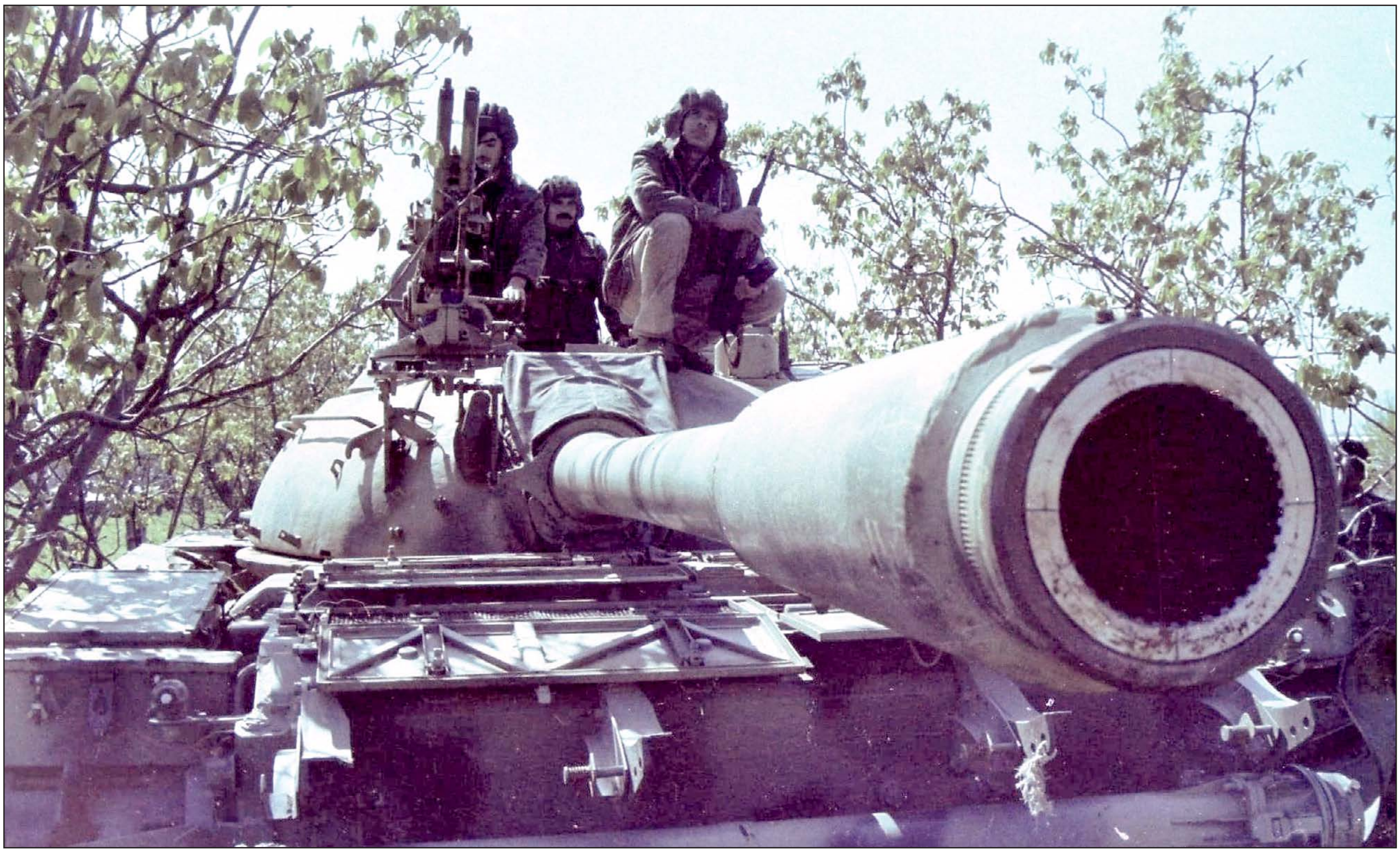
REORGANISATION

In the light of Palestinian and allied forces being small, fractured and scattered along the complex frontlines of the Lebanese Civil War, the question was what to expect in terms of the main axes of Israeli advances, and how to react to these. By early March 1982, Sayil and his staff concluded that there were three major options:

- a similar campaign of air and naval strikes as during the Two Week War of July 1981
- a limited Israeli advance to the Litani River, including an assault on the PLO-controlled Tyre Pocket
- a major advance in the direction of Beirut, possibly stopped in Damour.

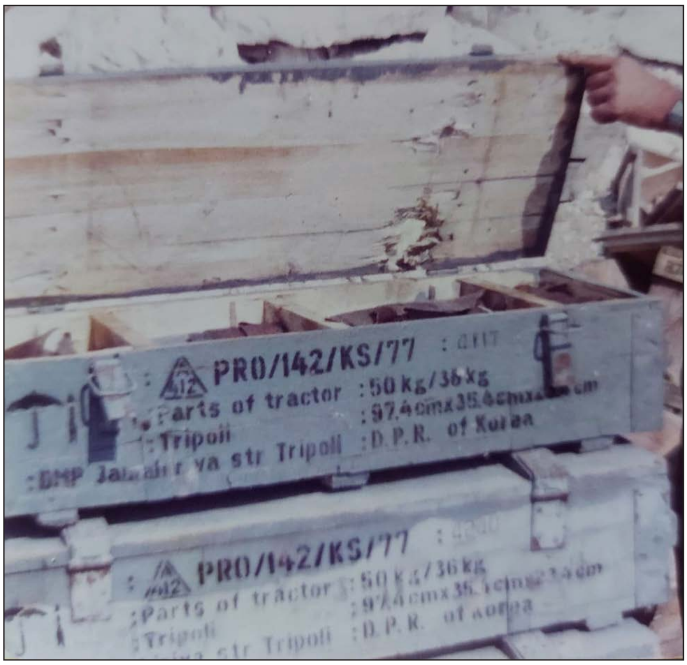
There was no agreement between Arafat, Sayil and their staff on the IDF's aims: some expected UNIFIL to stop the Israelis; others expected Israel would not go head-on against UNIFIL, and even less so the Syrians. The only thing they were able to agree about was to expect the IDF to advance along the coast to Tyre, perhaps to Sidon, and into the area between Nabatiyah and Hasbayya. Moreover, they expected an amphibious landing either in the area of Damour or Zahrani. Therefore, Arafat, Sayil and their staff initiated a reorganisation of their command and control facilities. For example: the Central Operational Room in Beirut had been hit and destroyed by the IDF/AF in July 1981. Instead of it, they constructed multiple HQs at several underground facilities in Beirut and set up two additional ones in Sidon and Tyre – all of which were lavishly equipped with portable radio equipment. All brigade commands were ordered to prepare detailed plans for fighting their own battles for up to six months, almost certainly isolated by IDF advances around their flanks, or because roads were likely to be blocked by air strikes and clogged by refugees. Elaborate networks of covered and concealed trenches were constructed around major points of defence, such as in the Beaufort Castle area, and artillery positioned in reinforced concrete shelters dug into the hillsides. Concrete bunkers and earth ramparts were constructed around all refugee camps and military bases in the Beirut area, both to impede bombing and possible ground attacks. The PFLP-GC went as far as to construct enough underground facilities equipped with sleeping quarters, kitchens, tiled bathrooms, and TV sets, to house its entire combat force inside. The most ambitious construction projects included the addition of two underground floors to the hospital in al-Bass refugee camp outside Tyre, and three parallel tunnels for the movement of combatants, ammunition, and even military vehicles between the Ain al-Hilweh and Mieh wa-Mieh refugee camps outside Sidon. All positions were subjected to regular inspections by top officials and military commanders.

Meanwhile, they initiated a campaign of collecting and stockpiling arms, ammunition, fuel, food and medical aids in the depots of their major forces so to enable these to continue fighting



A T-55 tank of the PFLP-GC. Led by Ahmad Jibril, this organisation received about 20 such tanks from Libya in 1980. (via Issam Bteddini)

even if completely surrounded. In turn, this was a measure aimed to pre-empt an Israeli attempt to cut off supply routes by air strikes, as in July 1981. This process went so far that every neighbourhood or camp in Beirut had its own depot with extensive supplies of food and water, and the PLO dug artesian wells in Beirut and several towns of southern Lebanon. Finally, aiming to counter possible Israeli landings along the coast, the PLO redeployed Fatah's Force 17, the entire Ras al-Ain Battalion, and an antiaircraft battery, an antitank battery, and several artillery batteries from Beirut into positions between Naameh in the north and Zahrani in the south.



PRO/142/KS/77
:Parts of tractor :50 kg/36 kg
:Tripoli :D.P.R. of Korea
PRO/142/KS/77
:Parts of tractor :50 kg/36 kg
:Tripoli :D.P.R. of Korea

Artillery ammunition acquired from North Korea, stored in boxes officially marked as 'parts of tractor', being inspected by an engineer of the IDF in the Sidon area. (Photo by Reouven Chasman)

Through the spring of 1982, the PLO stepped up its planning and preparations. Arafat not only carried out regular visits to all brigade and battalion commands, but carefully checked their fortifications, artillery emplacements and battle plans.

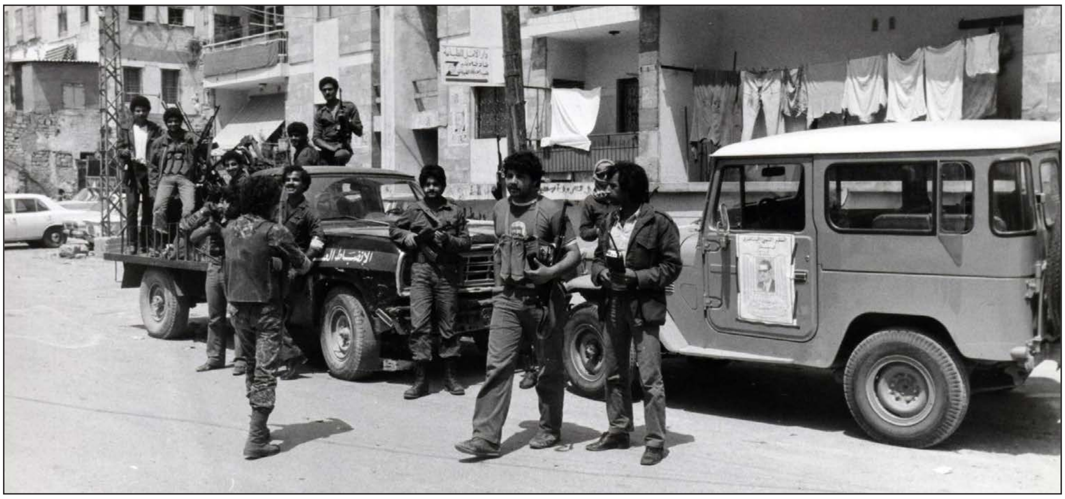
LAST MINUTE IMPROVISATIONS

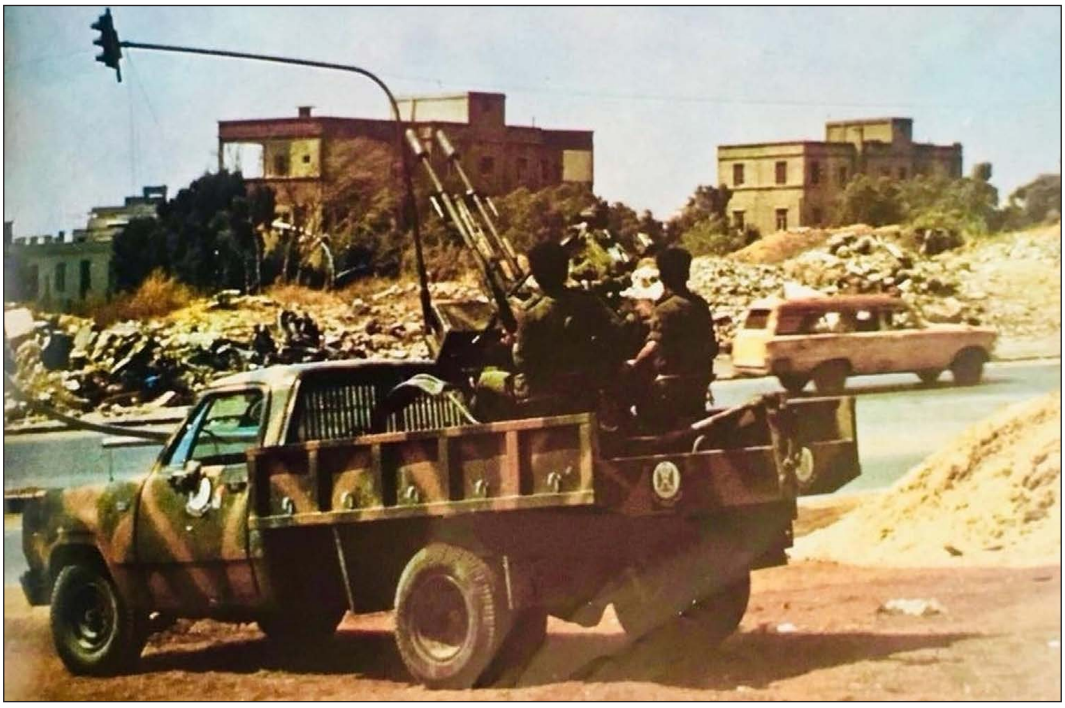
In mid-May 1982, Ghazi Atallah, commander of the Karameh Brigade, briefed his battalion- and company commanders about the assessment that the IDF would try to reach the Beirut–Damascus Highway. Lacking the necessary armament and equipment, his commanders could not reach an agreement about how to defend their sector other than to dig out eight vehicle emplacements. Eventually, the decision was taken to redeploy both the Karameh and Yarmouk Brigades closer to the Syrian positions in the Beka'a instead. On the coast, three of Fatah's tank companies were redeployed to the area between Zahrani and the outskirts of Damour, with an equivalent of four artillery- and two rocket battalions in support. Meanwhile, frontline units received 160mm mortars and 107mm MRLs, while antiaircraft units were deployed along the coast from Beirut to Rumaylah. Finally, on Arafat's insistence, guns were positioned in the hills of Doha, to counter any kind of amphibious landings in the Khalde area, while Force 17 was deployed along the coast of Beirut, at the international airport, and in the camp at Uzai.

The build-up culminated in late May 1982, by when the PLO had a very clear picture of what the IDF was about to do from a number of sources in the USA, USSR, France, and various Arab countries, as well as from the Christian enclaves in Lebanon. The information was so precise that the only detail missing was the exact date of attack. Therefore, the Fatah Qastal Brigade ('Force', in Palestinian terminology) and the PLA issued their Operation Orders No. 4 and No. 5, respectively, which distributed duties and targets between individual battalions, companies, tank platoons and artillery batteries, detailed road conditions, and discussed terrain, ordering commanders to deploy minefields and demolish specific bridges. While making little provision for coordination between Fatah, the PLA, and other factions, the two orders were to provide interlocking fields of fire for their artillery units, and paid special attention to probable Israeli routes of advance and the possibility of an amphibious landing with the aim of isolating Tyre or Sidon. At that time, the Joint Palestinian Forces were organised as follows:

- Fatah
- Palestine Liberation Army (nominally the military wing of the PLO but controlled by Damascus)
- Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)
- Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC)
- Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)
- Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)
- Arab Liberation Front (ALF)
- Popular Struggle Front (PSF)
- Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War – Lightning Forces (as-Sa'iqa, controlled by Damascus)

The primary elements were Fatah and the PLA, which controlled about 15,000 regular combatants. Only about 6,000 of these were deployed in southern Lebanon, of which some 4,500 were regulars,


Fatah and Popular Nasserist Organisation fighters in Sidon in April 1982. (Jamal Itani Collection)


A Dodge technical of the Arab Socialist Union (a Nasseriest Sunni Muslim Lebanese militia) armed with a ZU-23-2 twin 23mm antiaircraft gun, at the Corniche el-Mazraa, in Beirut in early 1982. (via Issam Bteddini)

According to Israeli intelligence, the football stadium in the Sport City of Beirut contained several major Palestinian ammunition depots. Therefore, the facility – and the nearby Burj el-Barajneh refugee camp – were heavily bombed by the IDF/AF on 4 and 5 June 1982. (Efim Sandler Collection)

operating between 80 and 85 T-34/85 tanks and 200 artillery pieces of very different types. Fatah had the biggest armed wing, including:

- Qastal Brigade, comprising
    Martyrs of September Battalion (Aabra area)
    Battalion of Muhammad Youssef an-Najjar (Tyre area)
    Yarmouk Battalion (Nabatiyah area)
    Ras al-Ayn Battalion (Naameh area)
    Special Forces Battalion (Zahrani area)

- Yarmouk Brigade, comprising
    Infantry Battalion (Demachqiye area)
    Infantry Battalion (Meidoun area)

- Karameh Brigade, comprising
    Jalil Battalion (Hasbayya area)
    Eagles of Arqub Battalion (Rachaya area)
    Karmil Battalion (Yanta area)

Additionally, Fatah and the PLA operated several artillery, antiaircraft and tank battalions, elements of which were deployed in areas of special interest. For example, the fleet of T-34/85 tanks was operated by three battalions of Fatah, and one regiment of the PLA. While named 'tank', the units in question were mixed outfits, usually operating 12 tanks, and a similar number of antitank guns, artillery pieces, and heavy machine guns. The mass of T-34s were in poor condition, de facto immobile and used as artillery. The best tanks in Palestinian hands were 20 T-54/55s Libya donated to the PFLP-GC. In similar fashion, a typical artillery battalion included just 12 field guns, howitzers, or rocket launchers.

Infantry formations were no bigger: a typical Fatah battalion counted just 150–250 combatants (strength varied widely), operating 24 medium and/or heavy weapons. Usually, the latter included three 12.7mm or 14.5mm machine guns; up to seven 23mm, 37mm, or 57mm antiaircraft guns; four 75mm recoilless guns; two 76mm or 85mm guns; three 81mm and three 120 or 160mm mortars; and two 107 or 122mm multiple rocket launchers.

At least nominally, the Joint Palestinian Forces were allied with, or supported by, the following Lebanese organisations and associated groups:

- Progressive Socialist Party (Druze)
- Ba'ath Party (Iraqi Branch)
- Popular Nasserist Organisation (pan-Arab)
- Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP)
- Lebanese Communist Party (LCP)
- Amal (Shi'a)

However, as the subsequent developments were to show, this alliance began falling apart before long.

5

6 JUNE 1982, MOVING INTO THE WAR

Officially at least, the reason the Begin government offered to the public for Operation Peace for Galilee was '290 terrorist attacks' since the ceasefire of July 1981. Ironically, this figure included clashes between the PLO and UNIFIL, clashes between various parties in southern Lebanon, accidents in which Palestinians were killed while carrying explosives or ammunition, and cases of Palestinians opening antiaircraft fire at IDF/AF aircraft violating Lebanese airspace – but attacks on Israel other than those launched in response to the Israeli air strikes on Palestinian bases since 4 June 1982.[1]

Operation Peace for Galilee officially began at 1200hrs local time on 6 June 1982. However, a large number of IDF units were already deployed well inside Haddad's enclave in southern Lebanon, and engineers had been checking routes for a massive deployment of armour, artillery and other elements for days. On the ground, four major units of the IDF became involved on this day, and this chapter will summarise their initial operations.[2]

91st 'GALLIL' DIVISION ON 6 JUNE 1982

Commanded by General Itzik Mordechai, the 91st Division was responsible for the initial advance along the coast to Tyre and Sidon. For this purpose, it moved in two columns:

- the 'breaching' group, including the 211th Armoured, 828th Infantry, and the 300th Territorial Brigade
- the 'reserve' group, consisting of the 847th Armoured and 939th Paratrooper Brigades, both of which were reservist units drawing their equipment from depots in the Haifa area

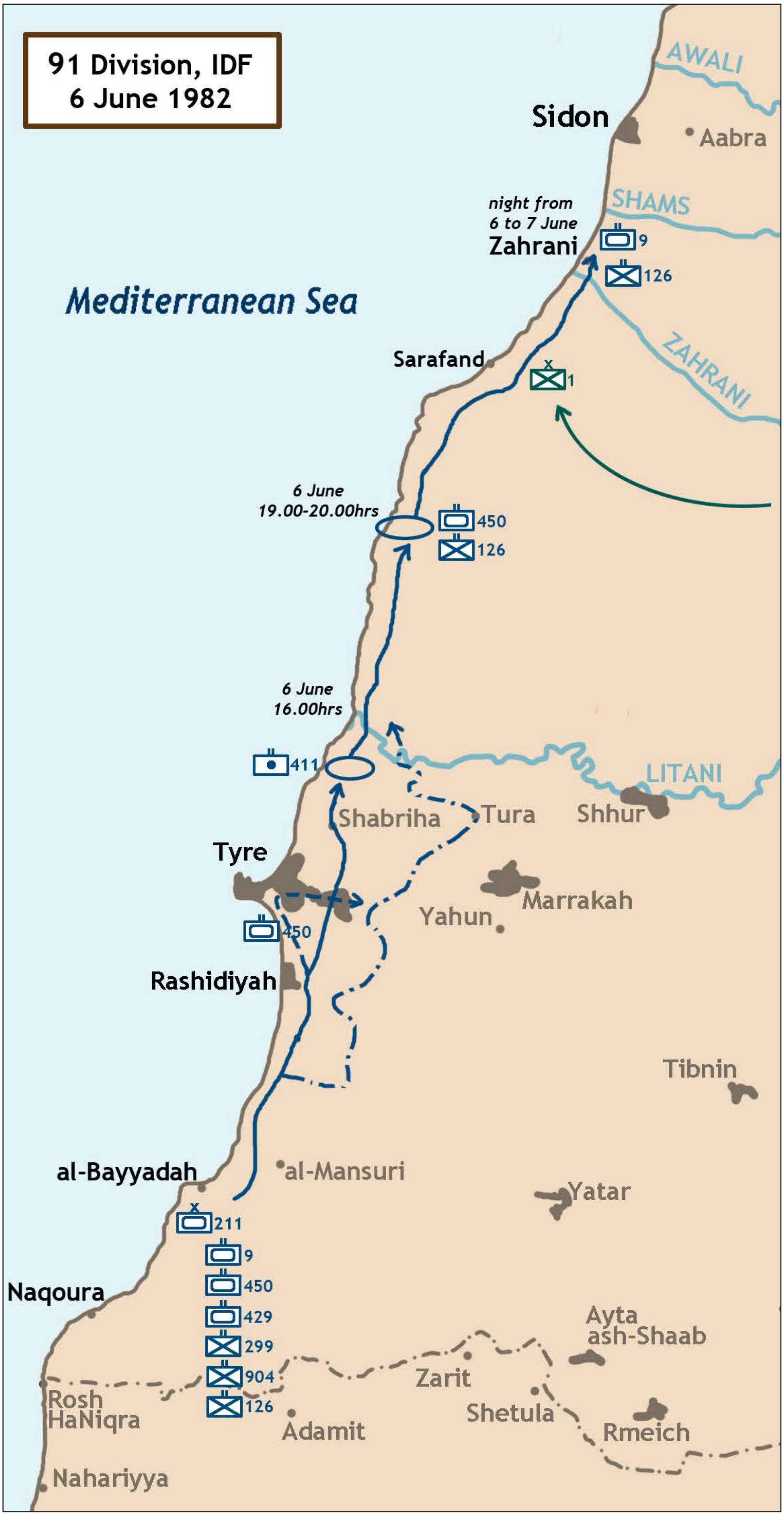
Divisional fire support was provided by the 7338th Artillery Brigade (CO Amos Tur), reinforced by two M109 batteries (one from the 96th Division, another from the 282nd Brigade), and an Observation Battalion from the School of Artillery. An additional battery of the 411th Artillery Battalion, supported by elements of the Observation Battalion was pre-positioned in the Ras al-Bayada area and had engaged selected targets since 5 June, but the first fire mission of the 7338th Brigade was to take place only in support of elements of the 91st Division in trouble in Tyre (see the next chapter).

The leading element of the 211th Brigade (CO Eli Geva), had been augmented by a company from the 605th Engineer Battalion, and a company of M163 Vulcan self-propelled antiaircraft guns from the 947th Battalion. The brigade advanced in the following order:

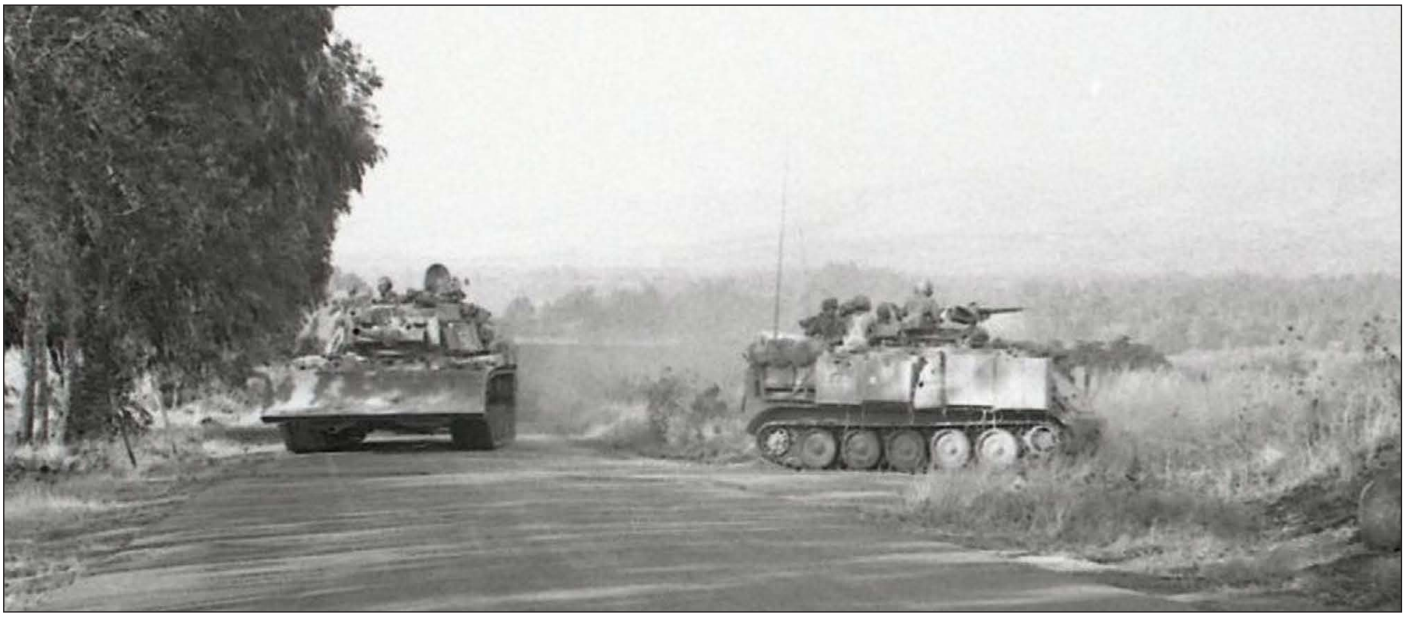
- 9th Battalion (CO Shlomo Ariel), led by L Company (CO Uri Wolf), an infantry company of the 906th Battalion mounted on M113s, and its K Company, followed by
- 450th Battalion, tanks from M Company of the 9th Battalion (828th Brigade), the 429th Battalion (300th Brigade), 299th Druze- and 904th Nahal Battalions, and the 126th Battalion.[3]

These units were followed by a long logistics train including a mix of armoured and softskin vehicles.

The 91st entered Lebanon in the Yarin area at 0600hrs on 6 June, then turned north-west and advanced on Shama. At 1100hrs, leading vehicles of the 9th Battalion entered the UNIFIL Zone at Ras al-Bayada, before splitting into two columns: the 126th Battalion led the main force along the coastal road, while the 9th crawled over the rough terrain, down narrow secondary routes between orchards and villages to the east. It was only while approaching al-Qulaylah, about 10km north of their entry point into Lebanon, that the Israelis experienced their first engagement with the PLO, when an RPG was fired at the leading tank. The round missed and the firing


91 Division, IDF
6 June 1982
AWALI
Sidon
Aabra
SHAMS
night from
6 to 7 June
Zahrani
9
126
Mediterranean Sea
Sarafand
ZAHRANI
1
6 June
19.00-20.00hrs
450
126
6 June
16.00hrs
411
LITANI
Shabriha
Tura
Shhur
Tyre
Marrakah
Yahun
450
Rashidiyah
Tibnin
al-Bayyadah
al-Mansuri
Yatar
211
9
450
429
299
904
126
Naqoura
Ayta
ash-Shaab
Zarit
Rosh
HaNiqra
Shetula
Adamit
Rmeich
Nahariyya

A map reconstructing the advance of the 91st Division on 6 June 1982. (Map by Tom Cooper)



Israeli armour – a Magach-6 MBT, with dozer blade, to the left, and an M113 APC to the right – near the border with Lebanon on 5 June 1982. (Photo by Igal Ashoach)

An M163 Vulcan Air Defence System (VADS) of the 947th Battalion, rushing to join the battle inside Lebanon. Vulcans proved to be the 'stars of the show', especially during the fighting in urban areas: nothing could match the versatility and the huge rate of firepower they could deliver. (via Alon Ben Moshe)

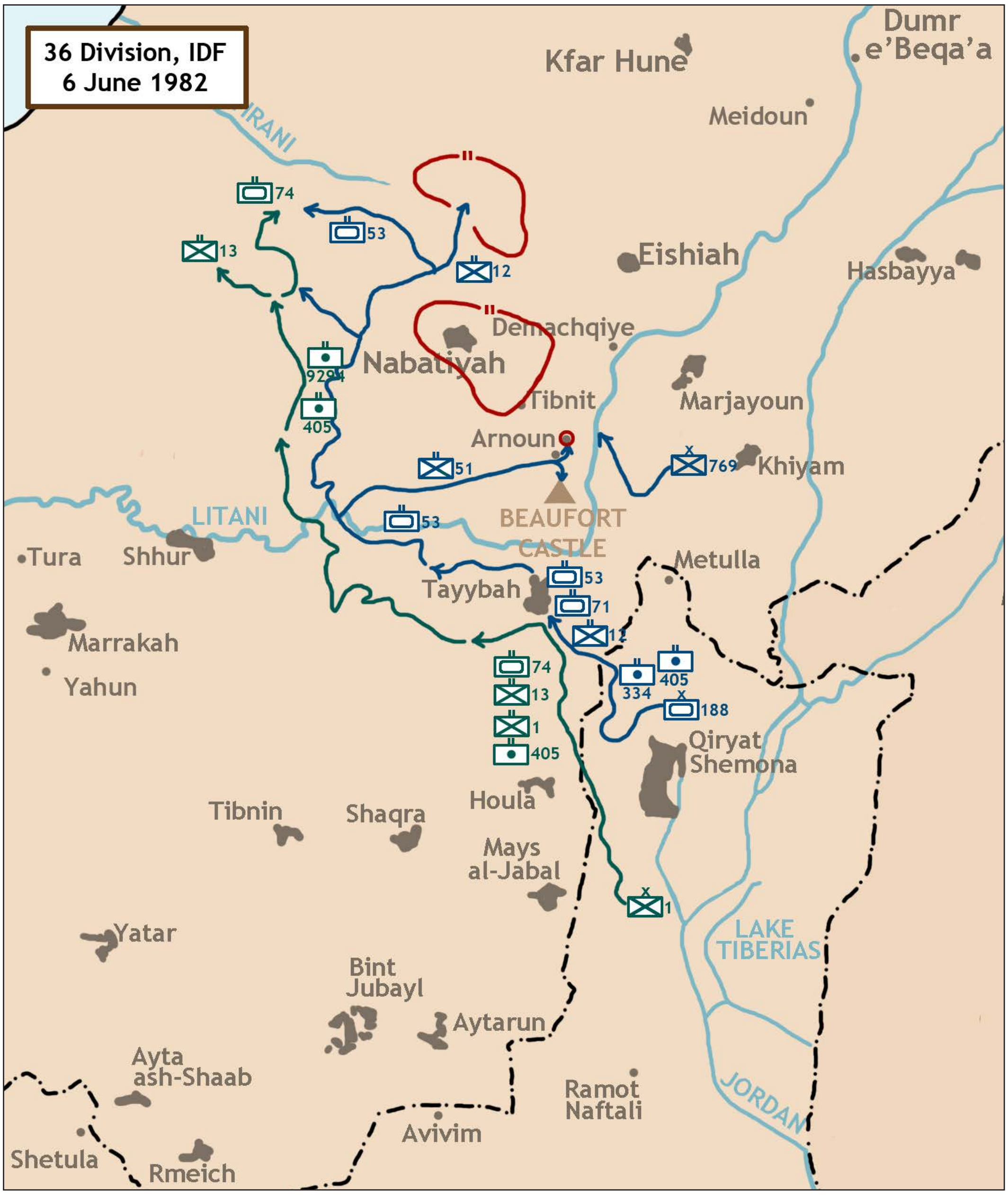
position was instantly destroyed by a combination of tank shells and machine gun fire. The advance went on and the tanks passed Dayr Qanun, while the main convoy proceeded towards Tyre. By noon, the march slowed down due to rugged terrain and the battalion commander decided to change the disposition of his units: K Company (commanded by Captain Moshe Yatom) took the lead. The resistance increased, too, with several tanks hitting small mines, although these caused only minor damage.

At 1600hrs, the 17th Battalion of the 828th Brigade with a tank company from the 429th Battalion reached Ras al-Ein and then turned east towards its objective in Qana, within the so-called 'Iron Triangle' (the area between Qana, Dayr Aames, and Jouaiyya). About one hour later, it quickly overran a Fatah base north of this village, encountering only minimal opposition: the place had earlier been subjected to air strikes, and the majority of militants ran away. After mopping up, the 17th Battalion went into a night bivouac south-east of Qana. Meanwhile, the 126th Battalion managed to bypass Tyre all the way to the Litani River, which it crossed over the Qasmiyeh bridge at 1800hrs before continuing for Zahrani. With this, the field headquarters of the 91st Division, originally positioned at Wadi Katiya, near the border village of Shelomi, relocated to Shakif al-Hordon: an outpost of Major Haddad's forces. By this time, the 7338th Artillery Brigade carried out its first fire mission in support of elements of the 91st Division troubled while bypassing Tyre. This included the deployment of cluster munitions when tanks of the 9th Battalion, 211th Brigade, were attacked at short range in the area of Burj el-Chmali.

36th 'GA'ASH' DIVISION ON 6 JUNE 1982

The first element of the 36th Division, commanded by Avigdor Kahalani, to cross the border was the 77th Battalion of the 7th Armoured Brigade. Assigned to the 769th Territorial Brigade for this task, the 77th was split into two combat teams:

- CO Force (CO Dubik Rosental), comprising H and V Companies, a platoon from the 1st Golani Infantry Brigade, a sapper platoon from the 605th Battalion, two M113s with 81mm mortars, and a Sho't MBT equipped with a mine-roller[4]
- XO Force (CO Moshe Levkovitz), comprising Z Company, and a platoon each of Golani infantry and engineers.


36 Division, IDF
6 June 1982
Kfar Hune
Dumr e'Beqa'a
Meidoun
IRANI
74
53
13
12
Eishiah
Hasbayya
Demachqiye
Nabatiyah
929
405
Tibnit
Marjayoun
Arnoun
769
Khiyam
51
53
LITANI
BEAUFORT CASTLE
Tura
Shhur
Metulla
Tayybah
53
71
12
Marrakah
Yahun
74
13
1
405
334
405
188
Qiryat Shemona
Tibnin
Shaqra
Houla
Mays al-Jabal
1
Yatar
LAKE TIBERIAS
Bint Jubayl
Aytarun
Ayta ash-Shaab
Ramot Naftali
JORDAN
Avivim
Shetula
Rmeich

A map of 36th Division's advances on 6 June 1982. (Map by Tom Cooper)

Divisional fire support was provided by the 282nd Artillery Brigade (CO Yoram Raviv), which had become involved on 5 June when called to support the advance of the 91st Division along the coast.

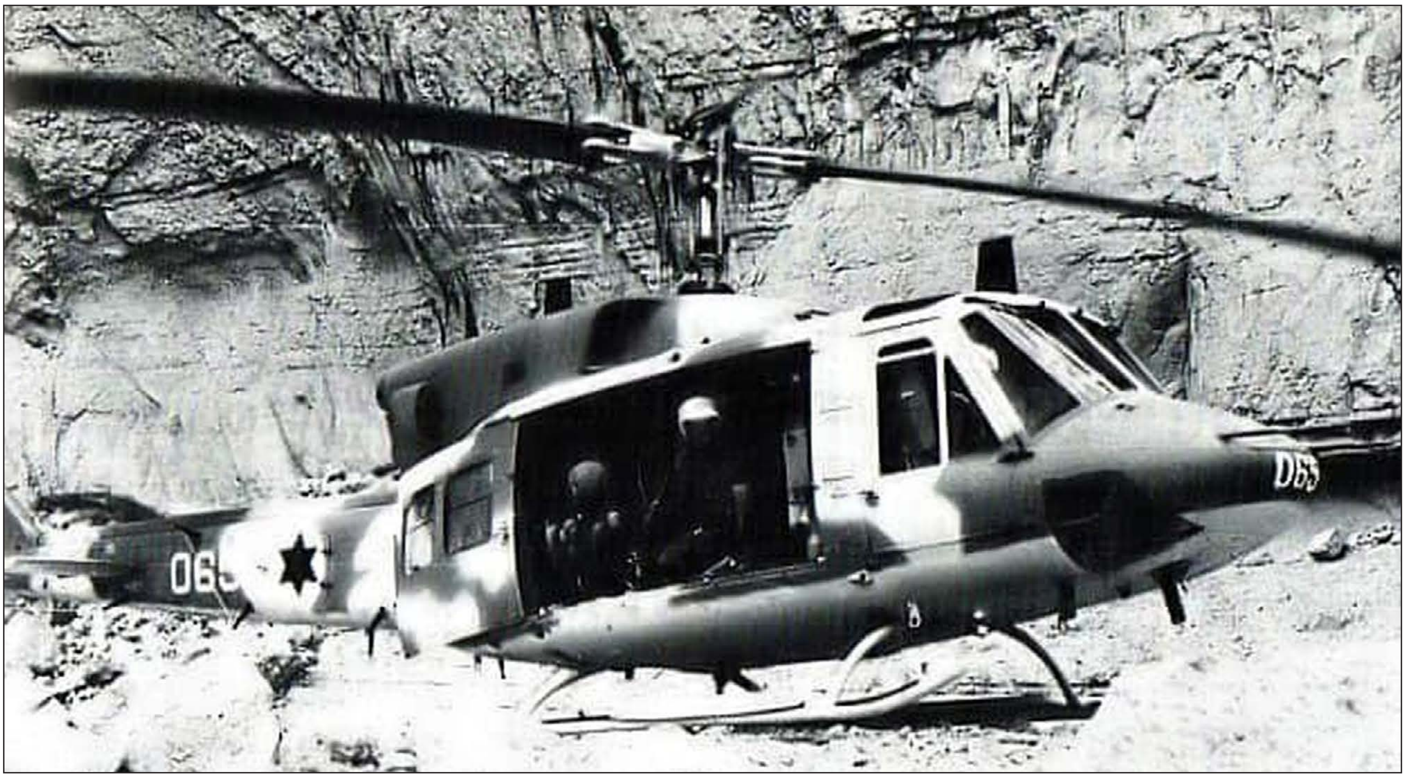
The CO Force moved via Marjayoun on Jarmaq and then on Kfar Roumane and Nabatiyah. For this purpose, V Company had deployed to Qlayaa together with the 188th Brigade on 5 June, and began firing at Fatah positions. The mass of the 77th Battalion crossed the border during the night of 5 to 6 June: the CO Force took positions west of Marjayoun and opened fire on targets in the area between Beaufort Castle in the south and Jarmaq in the north. The XO Force crossed Litani using the bridge at Khardale around 1100hrs, and advanced on Jarmaq, but had to stop: the CO Force lost an M113 mortar carrier and its sole mine-roller when it hit a minefield while crossing the river south of Mazraat Tamra. Clearing the route proved problematic because no mine-detectors were available, and an officer was wounded by an antipersonnel mine. When two other MBTs hit mines while trying to manoeuvre around damaged vehicles, Rosental decided to stop, withdraw, and make arrangements for the night. The 769th Brigade, which followed the 77th Battalion in crossing the Litani, came under heavy fire from the area between Nabatiyah and Tibnit just as it hit another minefield. As a consequence, it failed to clear the Khardale passage.

Meanwhile, the core of the 36th Division (CO Avigdor Kahalani) – with the 188th 'Barak' Armoured Brigade (CO Meir Dagan) and 1st Golani Infantry Brigade (CO Erwin Lavi) – was lodging at Gome junction, south of Quiryat Shemona. The two brigades began moving into Lebanon only at 1100hrs, and then organised into two task forces:

- 188th Brigade with the 53rd, 71st, and 12th Battalions, 605th Engineer Battalion and elements of the 947th Air Defence Battalion, followed by an artillery and logistics train advanced from Metula via Tayybah on the bridge at Aqiya
- 1st Brigade with tanks of the 74th Battalion, followed by 13th and 51st Battalions, engineers and other support elements advanced from Metula on Kfour

Leading the 188th Brigade, the 53rd Battalion took positions to cover the passage and let the rest of the division pass. A team of the Golani Brigade thus managed to reach the bridge at Aqiya by 1400hrs, as did a team from the Barak Brigade, but both became entangled in a huge traffic jam over the narrow passage, causing a delay of two hours. Needless to say, this completely ruined the timeline for the entire division on that day. Eventually, the majority of infantry crossed the Litani west of the bridge, before splitting again: 12th and 13th Infantry Battalions and 53rd and 74th Armoured Battalions proceeded northwards for Harouf and Kfour, followed by the divisional HQ, while the 51st and 71st Battalions, the Golani Reconnaissance Company and engineers went for Nabatiyah, aiming to connect with the 769th Brigade. It was only during the afternoon that both forces began encountering occasional small arms fire, and sporadic RPG-7 shots while passing the villages of Harouf and Arnoun.

Approaching Nabatiyah, the 71st Battalion became involved in a firefight and two of its tankmen were wounded. A Bell 212 helicopter from No. 123 Squadron was called for casualty evacuation (CASEVAC). While approaching the area, the crew made a mistake



A Bell 212 ('Anfa') serial number 065, seen serving with No. 123 Squadron, IDF/AF, before the war. This was the helicopter shot down near Natabiyah, with the loss of all five crewmembers and passengers, on 6 June 1982. (via Alon Ben Moshe)

A pair of MD.500 Defender attack helicopters of the IDF/AF underway low over typical hills of southern Lebanon. (IDF)

Merkava Mk 1 tanks of the 77th Battalion, 7th Armoured Brigade, with an M60 AVLB of the 605th Engineer Battalion, moving to a bivouac area on 5 June. Elements of the 605th entered Major Haddad's enclave on the evening of the same day, while the 77th Battalion followed the same night. (Photo by Itzik Saloni)

and passed low over a sector still under the control of Fatah: the helicopter was shot down – probably by two ZU-23-2 23mm antiaircraft guns – and its crew of two (pilot Major Eliezer Sion and co-pilot 1st Lieutenant Israel Shehchter), a medic (Dr Captain Stefan Landes), and two soldiers of the search and rescue Unit 669, all killed. In turn, McDonnell Douglas MD.500 Defender helicopters of No. 190 Squadron deployed their BGM-71 TOW antitank guided missiles (ATGMs) in combat for the first time. In their first action, around 1130hrs, they knocked out four Fatah-operated T-34/85s in the Nabatiyah area.[5]

The 1st Brigade began entering Lebanon via the Menara Gate at 1000hrs, with 334th Battalion (from the 219th Artillery Brigade) in front, followed by the 405th and 419th Battalions. However, before long, its 419th Battalion was reassigned to the 252nd Division, thus leaving the unit with only one of its integral elements: the 405th Battalion

Merkava Mk 1s of V ('Vulcan') Company, 77th Battalion, 7th Armoured Brigade, seen approaching the border with Lebanon. The 77th Battalion was the only element of this brigade to cross the border on 5–6 June, as part of the 36th Division. The rest of the 7th Armoured followed with the 252nd Division on 8 June. (Photo by Gali El)

Sho't Kal Gimel MBTs of the 53rd Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade, in their camping area near Kfar Giladi, on 6 June 1982. (Photo by Itzik Popper)

(CO Hezi Nagar). This now had to cover no fewer than four routes used by the division including:

- advance of the 769th Brigade on Jarmaq
- advance of 1st Brigade on Douer
- advance of 188th Brigade on Nabatiyah
- advance of the CO Force on Arnoun

By 2200hrs, it became evident that the CO Force was stuck in a very complex engagement in Arnoun. To recover the force, the operations officer of the 405th Battalion, Danni Kassif, requested that Northern Command assign him several units, especially to illuminate the battlefield. This task was accomplished by the 419th Battalion (160mm mortars), 9260th Battalion (M109 howitzers), and A Battery from 403rd Battalion, 215th Brigade. Their fire mission continued until 0400hrs by when all units had spent most of their illumination rounds.

At dusk, the 13th and 74th Battalions were in a night bivouac when a patrol from B Company of the Golanis encountered a convoy of five cars. Spotting a machine gun on top of one of the pickup trucks, the company commander ordered his troops to open fire: all five vehicles were hit and everybody inside was gunned down. Tanks of the 74th Battalion came under small arms fire, shortly later but – despite an order from its CO, Amiram Levin – the tankmen of Z Company responded with a fierce barrage. Meanwhile, the mechanised company of the 71st Battalion (CO Yossi Shanes), made extensive use of its M113s to carry fuel for its tanks: loaded with scores of 60-litre canisters of diesel, thus leaving no space for anyone other than the driver and commander, it made several trips up and down the axis of advance. Ironically, this proved unnecessary because the tanks managed to refuel at the Zahrani refinery.

162nd DIVISION ON 6 JUNE 1982

Commanded by Menachem Einan, the 162nd Division was the smallest of the four major commands employed by the IDF on 6 June 1982, and it included only one armoured brigade, the 500th (CO Doron Rubin). The latter had only two battalions of Magach 6B MBTs (195th and 430th), while its third battalion (433rd) was retained for the defence of the Golan Heights. Even so, the division was not on the move until early afternoon, when Einan was informed about the change in plans caused by the inability of the 769th Brigade to secure the Khardale crossing: his division was now to rush to the bridge at Aqiya.

That was very bad news, for the 162nd was planned to follow the 36th along narrow roads from Egel Gate to Nabatiyah: without these being free, traffic snarls were inevitable. However, orders were orders, and Einan had his tanks on the move by 1600hrs. In

The crew of an M113 fitter's vehicle helping deal with the thrown track of a Magach-6B MBT from the 195th Battalion, 500th Armoured Brigade. (IDF)

front was the 430th Battalion (CO Yossi Aviram), followed by the 195th (CO Ami Even), infantry of the 932nd Battalion (CO Sander Ben-Ari), 601st Engineers (CO Pini Dagan) and other elements. Crawling after the tail of Kahalni's division, Einan's force only managed to reach the southern approaches to the bridges at Aqiya before having to stop for the night: their only excitement of that day was encountering vehicles rushed to CASEVAC wounded troops of the Golani Brigade. For this purpose, tanks of the 500th Brigade had to leave the narrow road, as there was no other way to organise a two-direction traffic. Moreover, part of the division had to stay south of the border and wait for additional units to arrive, including the 433rd Battalion, M Company of the 195th Battalion, the 9263rd Battalion (939th Reserve Paratrooper Brigade), and a company of the 532nd Battalion from the 460th Armoured Brigade. All of these began moving only after midnight, in a large convoy led by Benny Beit-Or, CO of the 433rd.

Travelling in the wake of the 162nd Division was the 275th Battalion (CO Ilan Eshel), a unit reporting directly to Northern Command, but logistically assigned to the 847th Armoured Brigade. Originally starting its march from the Qurdani Storage Depot, near Haifa and tasked with securing Tyre, the battalion's Sho't Kal-A/B MBTs crossed at Border Mark 14, near Metula before running into the tail of the 162nd Division, that in turn was waiting for the 36th to secure the area. Once it resumed moving, it crossed the Litani River, and connected to the 166th Brigade, which followed into Lebanon on the morning of 7 June.

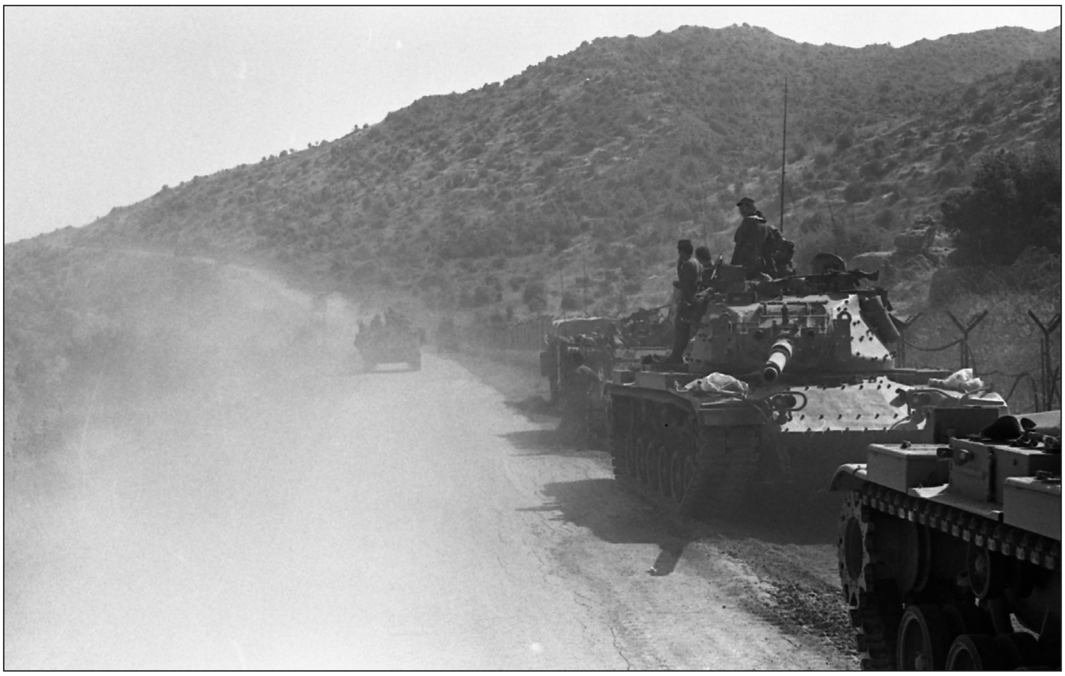
Divisional fire support was provided by the 219th Artillery Brigade, which included two battalions equipped with M109s (402nd and 403rd), and one (55th) operating a mix of M107s and M110s. Within hours of the start of operation, only the 403rd Artillery Battalion (CO Yaakov Ben-Kiki) – which entered Lebanon in a convoy with the 195th Battalion – was still assigned to the headquarters of the 162nd Division, for the others were assigned different tasks: for example, the 55th, which entered Lebanon early on 6 June, was shelling the roads in the Hasbayya area in support of the 96th Division, while the 402nd was fetched to support the 91st Division along the coast. The 403rd's first action consisted of deploying cluster munitions against a concentration of vehicles in the Qlaiaa area, next to Marjayoun.

252nd 'SINAI' DIVISION ON 6 JUNE 1982

The eastern-most major Israeli force entering Lebanon on 6 June was the 252nd Division (CO Emanuel Sakal). It was still in the process of reorganisation and experiencing major issues just controlling all of its units: its 330th Armoured Brigade (Reserve) existed on paper only, and was never even established, while the 14th Armoured was still in southern Israel. Other subordinated elements included a wide variety of assets. A good example was Unit 269 – better known as the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit or, more commonly, Sayeret Matkal: a field intelligence unit capable of conducting reconnaissance deep behind enemy lines and of counter-terrorist operations and hostage rescue, usually directly assigned to the General Headquarters of the IDF. This unit arrived equipped with its own communication systems, entirely incompatible with those of the division. Another element, the 606th Engineer Battalion, arrived on the scene without a single piece of heavy machinery; while the newly established 66th Air Defence Artillery Battalion actually consisted of just one company. Above all, the two essential

An M60 AVLB of the Heavy Mechanical Company, 605th Engineer Battalion, seen passing a UNIFIL checkpoint when the 36th Division began moving into Lebanon on 6 June 1982. (By Jean-Claude Coutausse) formations of the division – the 261st Infantry Brigade and the 401st Armoured Brigade – were assembled only through immense pressure upon the logistics and ordnance system of the IDF, on the eve of the operation, and still camping in the Metula area.

The plan for Operation Peace for Galilee expected the 252nd to emplace its field headquarters on the Astra-A post on Upper Hermon (Mount Jebel Sheikh), while deploying two task forces, both of which were to meet at Hasbayya late on 6 June:



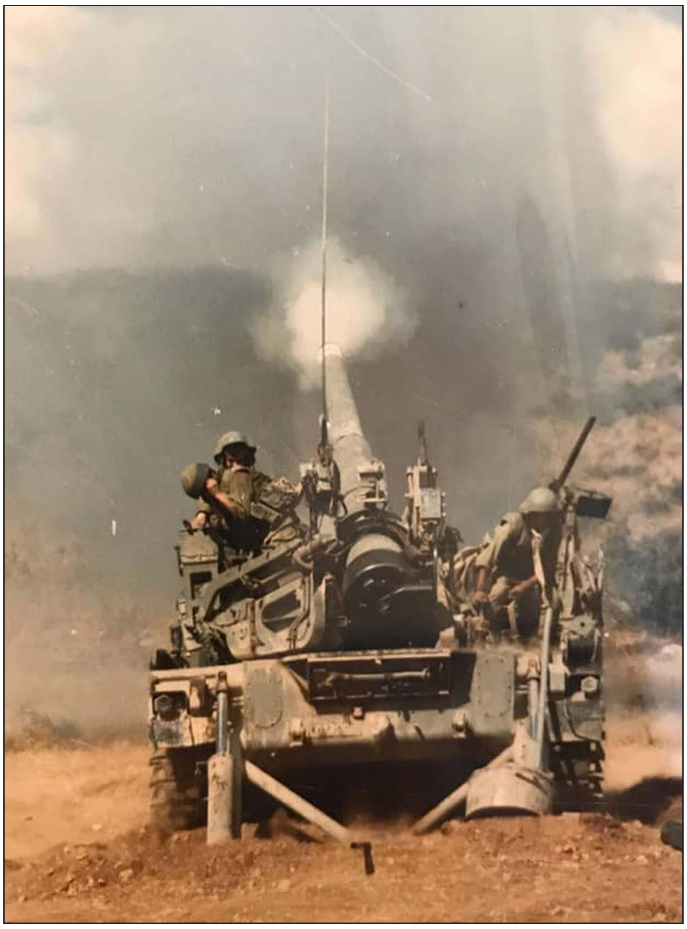
A brand-new M60A3 TTS of the 52nd Battalion, 401st Armoured Brigade, seen shortly after entering Lebanon on 7 June 1982. The tank has already been equipped with attachment points for Blazer explosive reactive armour (ERA) but has not yet had the panels fitted, nor the smoke grenade launchers that would bring it to the Magach-6G standard. This was a common practice because the accessories were delivered separately. (Harvard Collection)

- 401st Brigade's CO Force (CO Uzi Lev-Tzur), with two companies of Magach-6B MBTs from the 52nd Battalion, one infantry company of the 261st Battalion, engineers of the 606th Battalion, and a battery of M109s from the 404th Artillery Battalion (CO Asher Hazan)
- 401st Brigade's XO Force (CO Itzhak Lev-Ari), with two tank companies of the 46th Battalion, the 931st Battalion of the Nahal Brigade, 261st Force (CO Efi Yitam), and an infantry battalion

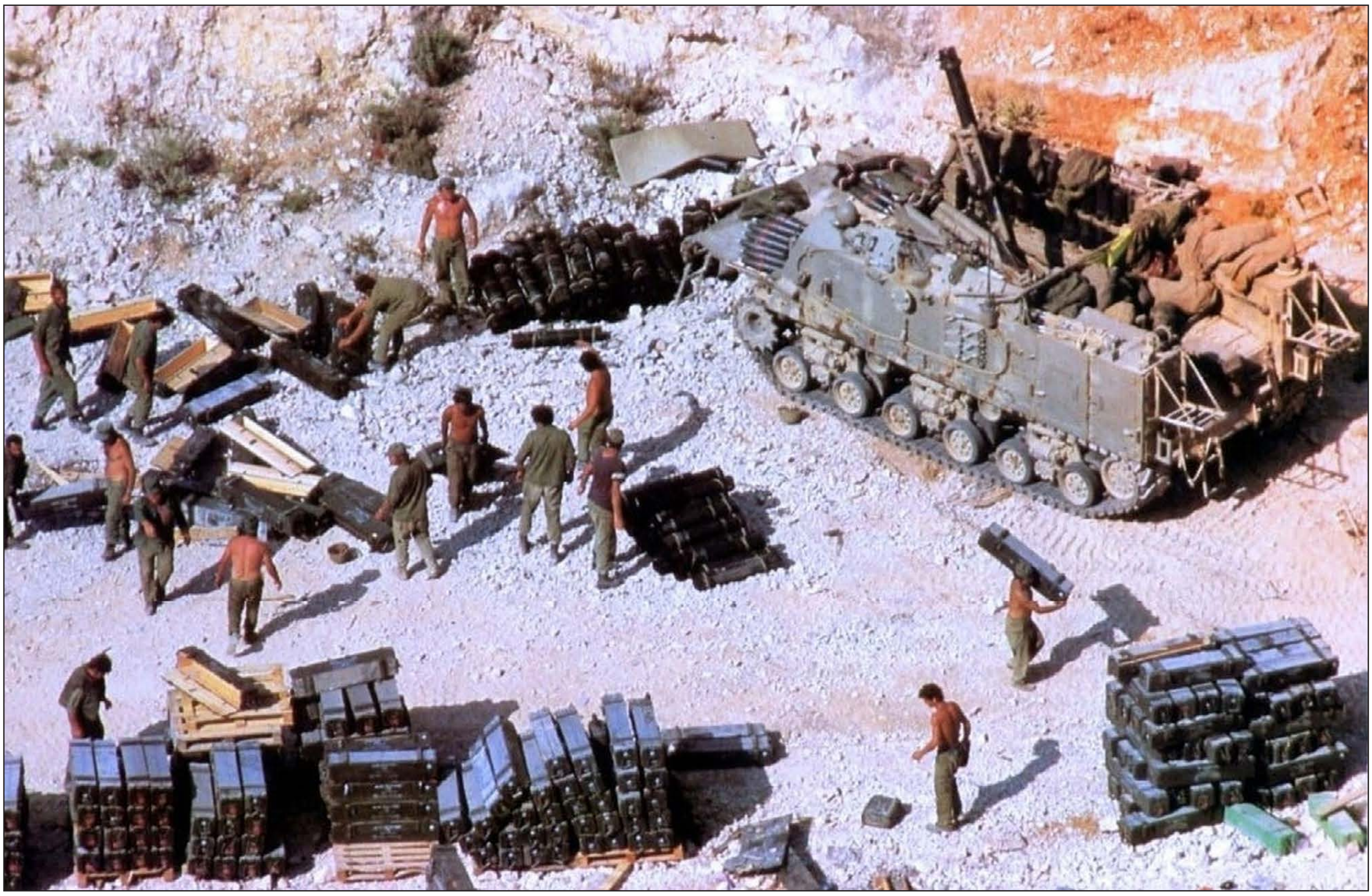
Both had orders to take-up positions along the border with Syria, but not to engage any Syrian forces. Fire support was to be provided by the M109-equipped 404th Artillery Battalion of the 209th Artillery Brigade, two M107-equipped battalions (412th and 8194th) of Northern Command's 219th Artillery Brigade, and M66 160mm heavy mortars of the 419th Battalion from the 282nd Brigade. The 209th Brigade was the first to open fire, firing around 200 shells on 5 June; mortar tracks of the 419th Battalion followed by providing fire support for the 74th Battalion of the 188th Brigade as it was crossing the Litani River. The 412th Battalion entered Lebanon via the Tulip Gate and was deployed around Marjayoun by the late afternoon.

The XO Force led the way with the 46th Battalion in front, followed by the 261st Brigade, crossing the border via the Tulip Gate, east of Metula. The CO Force crossed the border near Shaba and moved on Wadi Shaba, experiencing major difficulties while navigating narrow mountain tracks. Shortly after entering the wadi, the lead tank of the 52nd Battalion collapsed the road, and the entire unit was stuck: all recovery attempts failed and the entire task force had to make a U-turn along a narrow route. Eventually, the battalion then followed the XO Force instead, while Lev-Tzur proceeded towards Hasbayya with his APC, leaving a blocking force of the 261st Brigade in Wadi Shaba for the next few days.

While all of the advancing elements did manage to gather near Hasbayya that evening, other elements of the 252nd Division experienced a rather uneventful day, reporting only a few minor engagements and some imprecise Syrian artillery fire at dusk. The most unpleasant incident occurred when members of the 46th Battalion decided to make a fire for cooking, that evening – and in turn received an RPG-7 round that injured three. Inside Israel, the 14th Armoured Brigade started its voyage to the Golan Heights at around 0930hrs that morning, but with only seven tanks. Reinforced



An M107 175mm howitzer from the 55th Battalion, 215th Artillery Brigade, firing from a position inside southern Lebanon. M107s and M110s, later on, were never underrated by the IDF troops: they both packed immense firepower which they could deliver over great range. (via Alon Ben Moshe)



Old but not useless! 160mm Soltam mortars were installed on the chassis of old Sherman tanks, thus creating highly mobile platforms. This example was photographed while serving with the 419th Battalion, 282nd Artillery Brigade. The type proved highly effective against entrenched positions: working from the Marjayoun area, they were in such high demand, that the unit rapidly ran out of ammunition. (via Alon Ben Moshe)

by additional vehicles (including the tank of the Brigade CO, five tanks of the 184th Battalion, and three of the 79th Battalion), it crossed the border at the Tulip Gate at 1630hrs, and went into a bivouac near Souk el-Khan. At that point it was reinforced by the Gefen Battalion of the 261st Brigade (CO Giora Eiland), and M113 APCs of the 424th Battalion, ordered by Sakal to help improve the security of the small unit.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS AND NORTHERN COMMAND

Ariel Sharon and Rafael Eitan spent the whole of 6 June in the Operations Room of Northern Command, where they were joined by Menachem Begin during the afternoon. Generally, they were pleased with the pace of the advance, especially because the 91st and 96th Divisions were making good progress, and the 36th was moving in the same direction. Complications in the Tyre area were anticipated by Sharon, and thus he quickly ordered the units to bypass and secure it the next day. On the contrary, the Israeli Minister of Defence was displeased by the performance of the IDF/AF and demanded it press harder and increase the number of sorties. Finally, he stopped the 91st Division from crossing the Zahrani River during the night, to avoid unnecessary complications. To Sharon's relief, the situation with Syria began to clarify when the SyAA shelled the 252nd Division: this offered him a good excuse to attack them. The decision was taken to perform a flanking movement with the 162nd Division from the west, and take Jezzine. Moreover, Northern Command's intelligence began tracking the movement of Syrian reinforcements: the 1st Infantry Division was in the process of deploying in the Beka'a Valley and Jezzine – all of which gave Sharon a good chance to get the next stage of 'his' operation approved by the cabinet.

6

MISFORTUNES IN TYRE

Though most of the ground units of the IDF had not seen much action on 6 June 1982 and spent the day travelling into southern Lebanon and to the Litani River, this does not mean that the day was uneventful. Quite the contrary, it was 'just another day' of feverish action – on both sides.

Two days earlier, when the Israelis resumed their air strikes on Palestinian bases in Lebanon, Yasser Arafat had been in Saudi Arabia. He had got back to Beirut a day later, only to receive a growing number of reports about massive Israeli bombardments and artillery barrages. Before long, it was obvious that Israel was up to 'something unexpectedly big'; indeed, that the extent of the IDF's deployment was such that the only way to counter it effectively was though international pressure – primarily through the UN. This soon became an imperative as the coherence of the Joint Palestinian Forces and its allies began crumbling on Saturday 5 June: Mahmoud Ghadar, commander of Amal's militia, and the Druze leader Wallid Jumblatt both ordered their forces not to oppose the Israelis, but to surrender if necessary. By 6 June 1982, it became known that Ghazi Atallah, commander of the Karameh Brigade, had disappeared (only to pop-up in the Syrian garrison of Chtoura, two days later). Hajj Ismail, commander of the Qastal Brigade, and the commander of the Martyrs of September Battalion, Kamal ash-Shaykh, followed in similar fashion a day later. As their commanders began fleeing, the mass of Palestinian militants lost heart and abandoned their positions too, offering only sporadic resistance. The almost total collapse of the Joint Palestinian Forces' chain of command became the reason that the IDF encountered unexpectedly little resistance: indeed, why it ran into only a few minefields, and found no bridges demolished. Correspondingly, Nabatiyah and the Iron Triangle fell with little, if any opposition. The only area where the Israelis encountered organised resistance on the 'first day' of their invasion was Tyre.

DANGEROUS LABYRINTH[1]

The first objective of the 91st Division's leading unit – the 211th Brigade – was Tyre: a town and port of about 12,000 people. Due to its geographic location – 25km north of the border with Israel, and on the coastal road to Sidon and Beirut – the area had been a hotspot of Fatah activity for over a decade. It remained under Fatah's control despite the UNIFIL deployment in 1978–1979, and contained four major refugee camps – el-Buss, Maachouq, Burj el-Chamli, and Rashidiyeh – housing about 30,000 displaced persons. Control over this enclave was exercised by the commander Azmi Sughayyar (or 'Sghayir') from the Qastel Brigade. Sughayyar's forces were organised into three battalions, comprising a mix of about 1,200 Fatah regulars and volunteers, and combatants from militias drawn from the local population:

- One infantry battalion, responsible for defending Tyre, focusing on its southern and eastern side
- One infantry battalion, responsible for the defence of Rashidiyeh, north of Tyre; and
- One infantry battalion, responsible for the defence of Burj el-Chmali (with one company forward-deployed further east).

Put on alert on 4 June, these battalions were distributed into numerous smaller teams that operated in a synchronised manner and were tasked to cause maximum possible damage to the IDF.

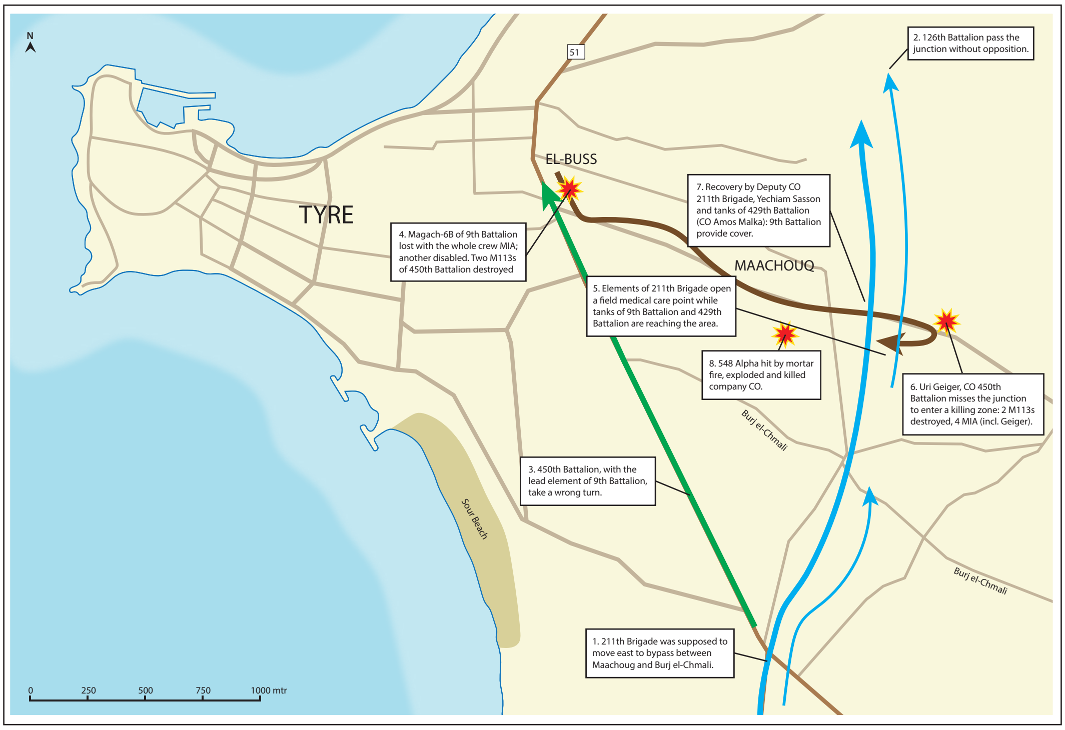
GEIGER'S WRONG TURN

The first IDF unit to approach Tyre was the Merkava Mk 1-equipped 126th Battalion (CO Yadid Gilad) from the 211th Brigade (CO Eli Geva). Reinforced by A Company of the 450th Battalion (828nd Brigade), this marched along the coastal road with the intention of bypassing Tyre and cutting along a passage between the refugee camps of Maachouq and Burj el-Chmali. Right behind the forward convoy was a second, including the 450th Battalion (CO Uri Geiger), comprising B/Fire Support Company with Magach-6B MBTs, M Company of the 9th Battalion, and the 605th Engineering Battalion. The third column included two Merkava companies of the 429th Battalion (CO Amos Malka).

Advancing at a high pace, the 126th Battalion moved forward as planned, encountering only light resistance. Even so, it lost a M113 of the battalion technical team and one Merkava was damaged by an RPG-7 and its commander killed by a sniper. However, slowed down by the D7 armoured bulldozers of its engineers, the 450th Battalion then lost visual contact with the column ahead of it. Geiger contacted the brigade HQ and asked for permission to leave the dozers behind in order to speed up – but was ordered to hold

Merkava Mk 1 tanks of the 126th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade, lined up on the coastal road. (via Alon Ben Moshe)

A Magach-6B MBT of M ('Magen') Company, 9th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade: this vehicle led the assault of the 450th Battalion, when it ran into an ambush in el-Buss. It rolled away to hit a building that collapsed, instantly killing the loader. Other crewmembers managed to evacuate the vehicle but only one survived and was returned to the IDF the next day. (Photo by Jean-Claude Coutausse)


N
51
EL-BUSS
TYRE
MAACHOUQ
Sour Beach
Burj el-Chmali
Burj el-Chmali
2. 126th Battalion pass the junction without opposition.
7. Recovery by Deputy CO 211th Brigade, Yechiam Sasson and tanks of 429th Battalion (CO Amos Malka): 9th Battalion provide cover.
4. Magach-6B of 9th Battalion lost with the whole crew MIA; another disabled. Two M113s of 450th Battalion destroyed
5. Elements of 211th Brigade open a field medical care point while tanks of 9th Battalion and 429th Battalion are reaching the area.
8. 548 Alpha hit by mortar fire, exploded and killed company CO.
6. Uri Geiger, CO 450th Battalion misses the junction to enter a killing zone: 2 M113s destroyed, 4 MIA (incl. Geiger).
3. 450th Battalion, with the lead element of 9th Battalion, take a wrong turn.
1. 211th Brigade was supposed to move east to bypass between Maachoug and Burj el-Chmali.
0
250
500
750
1000 mtr

Action in Tyre on 6 June 1982. (Map by George Anderson)

down. This proved no bad idea as shortly after passing Ras el-Ein a Merkava from the 429th Battalion rolled off a terrace and required recovery by the bulldozers of the 605th Battalion.

As the leading element of the 450th – including three Magach-6s (M Company, 9th Battalion) and three M113s of B Company – approached to about 2,000 metres south of Tyre, around 1200hrs, their crews spotted tank tracks running off the main route and to the east. The commander thus called Geiger by radio to ask whether to continue along the main route or follow the tracks. Uri Geiger, who took over only shortly before the operation and thus failed to take part in the 211th Brigade's mission briefing, and whose command vehicle was suffering problems with communication, then issued the fateful order for the element to continue straight for Tyre. This brought the six vehicles straight into the el-Buss refugee camp: shortly after crossing the main square there, they were engaged by heavy antitank and small arms fire. The lead Magach received an RPG hit, sped up, and smashed into a home about 200 metres north of the junction. The collapsing concrete killed the loader, while the other three crewmembers took cover behind the building. Another tank ditched off the road, throwing a track in the process, probably due to a mine. The APC belonging to the element commander, Nir Bar-Zohar, was hit while passing the junction and set ablaze. Bar-Zohar ordered his men out of their vehicles and to take cover behind the buildings, and advised Geiger of their situation. In turn, around 1230hrs, Geiger called the brigade HQ to report his leading force had been ambushed, though he could not tell exactly where.

RECOVERY PARTY

Yechiam Sasson, Deputy Commander of the 211th Armoured Brigade, was travelling with the convoy of the 429th Battalion, right behind Geiger's force: thus, he took command of the recovery operation and ordered the CO of the 450th Battalion to join him. Due to the confined terrain, the recovery party eventually included just one of Sasson's Merkavas, four Magachs from M Company, and five M113s (Sasson's, and four from the 450th Battalion, including two operated by that unit's medical officers). The plan was to move north-east and then turn west at the junction between Maachouq and el-Buss, leaving behind a part of the 450th to set up a blocking position and a CASEVAC site.

Once on the move, Sasson established radio contact with Bar-Zohar: this helped him direct the artillery fire some 500 metres west of the estimated position of the trapped force. Thus, the recovery party reached the ambush scene without incident and Sasson quickly distributed his five MBTs to cover the infantry: their fire forced the Palestinians to stop converging from all directions. The crisis was barely over when the sole Merkava received an RPG hit that disabled its main gun: Sasson ordered the crew to lock the gun and take the wounded into their tank's rear compartment: after about 30 minutes, it appeared that all the troops of B Company had been accounted for and loaded onto the APCs and the Merkava, and the party began moving out. However, it missed the tank that had hit the house about 200 metres further north and could not be seen: its three survivors were forgotten in the chaos and captured by Palestinians.

Sasson's force withdrew to the junction between Maachouq and Burj el-Chmali (codenamed 'Bokito-Godelet' by the IDF) with the intention of unloading the wounded and providing them with first aid there, before returning south-east to the main route. As the column was approaching the junction, Geiger's APC – in which Sasson was also travelling – was engaged by small arms fire and RPGs, but missed. However, in the excitement of combat, his driver missed the junction by more than 200 metres and ran into Burj el-Chmali Camp. Realising the mistake, Sasson ordered a reverse, when the vehicle received the first RPG hit that wounded two of the crew. Still capable of action, the driver turned sharply back, when the second RPG slammed into the engine compartment, instantly disabling the M113. Left without choice, Sasson ordered everybody out just before the intercom ceased to function – and moments before a third RPG hit set the vehicle on fire. That was around 1600hrs.

The rest of the recovery party concentrated at the junction, only to start receiving heavy small arms and machine gun fire from multiple directions. When an M113 commanded by the Deputy Operations Officer of the 450th Battalion attempted to reach the trapped men, it encountered a hail of fire and was forced to withdraw. At least a quarter of an hour later, the trapped force received an unexpected 'reinforcement'. M109s of the 411th Battalion – temporarily assigned to the 211th Brigade – followed the 450th Battalion straight into another ambush. An M548 ammunition carrier fully loaded with 96 155mm shells, was hit by a mortar round or heavy machine gun, and set on fire, forcing the crew to abandon it. Seconds later, the vehicle exploded, instantly killing the commander of A Battery, Gidi Rosh, who was busy evacuating casualties. His deputy, Shuli Levi, ordered the following vehicles to get off the asphalt road, and advance on a secondary track. The manoeuvre was executed under

The wreckage of an M113 APC of B Company (CO Nir Bar-Zohar) found destroyed inside el-Bass). (via Efim Sandler)

Two M113s of the 906th Battalion, both knocked out in Burj el-Chmali. (Photo by Jean-Claude Coutausse)

extreme difficulties because of little space and because the column of M109s, ammunition carriers and trucks was underway in a very tight convoy. Minutes after starting to move again, Rosh's command approached the junction of Maachouq and Burj el-Chmali and promptly came under severe small arms fire, and then some artillery shelling – which disabled several vehicles and caused numerous injuries. For the next 20–30 minutes, the trapped forces remained pinned down, without any air or artillery support – until Sasson managed to mark his position with two smoke grenades. Using the columns of smoke for orientation, the crew of a Magach from the 9th Battalion managed to find Sasson and recover him, in turn starting the second recovery effort.

SECOND AND THIRD RECOVERY ATTEMPTS

After several iterations of tanks from 9th Battalion racing in and out to recover the trapped men, Sasson got in touch with Amos Malka, CO 429th Battalion, and ordered him to join the recovery effort. This unit advanced to the Bokito-Godelet junction, collecting scattered troops of the 450th Battalion into the rear compartments of its Merkavas. While doing this, they had to lock the turrets of their tanks and thus were unable to make use of their main guns: the only armament available were the tank commanders' and loaders' machine guns. After several such efforts, four Merkavas – one of which was shared by Sasson and Malka – entered Burj el-Chmali, attracting huge volumes of small arms, machine gun and RPG-fire, until one of the tank commanders was badly injured. The force withdrew and a new effort was organised in consultation with Amos Gotlib, CO 828nd Brigade: this time, a large force of Merkavas was to enter the area, carrying infantry that was to act as a search party and comb every destroyed APC and other vehicle.

As soon as the tank column moved in, an RPG hit one of the Merkavas, killing its commander: the rest of the force pushed through but found no survivors: eventually, the CO of 91st Division, Itzik Mordechai, decided to stop further recovery attempts until the next morning. By now, three members of the 450th Battalion including its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Uri Geiger, were missing, as was the entire crew of a Magach-6 of the 9th Battalion: later on, it turned out that one soldier from each unit had survived, but all the others were captured and had been executed, including Geiger.

SHOWDOWN AT BOKITO-GODELET

Shortly before the fight for Burj el-Chmali, a combat team of the 9th Battalion – comprising tanks of L Company, a company from the 906th Nahal Infantry Battalion, and a platoon from the 605th Engineering Battalion – crossed the Bokito-Godelet junction, only to receive heavy small arms- and RPG fire. The battalion commander's tank was hit by an RPG and the convoy was stuck for several minutes while infantry combed the area supported by fire from tanks and APCs. It was only the sheer volume of fire outpoured by all the vehicles that prevented another major crisis.

In the final action of that evening, the 906th Battalion received an order from the 300th Brigade to assault and secure Burj el-Chmali. Its commander, Zalman Kovransky, decided to go in without any tank support, driving his unit's M113s down the main street. Rather unsurprisingly, the 906th found itself locked in a fierce crossfire. Fortunately for the unit, it suffered no fatalities by the time it was

קורס מ"כים פלוגה ב' צנחנים
מחזור "שלום- הגליל" תשמ"ב 1982

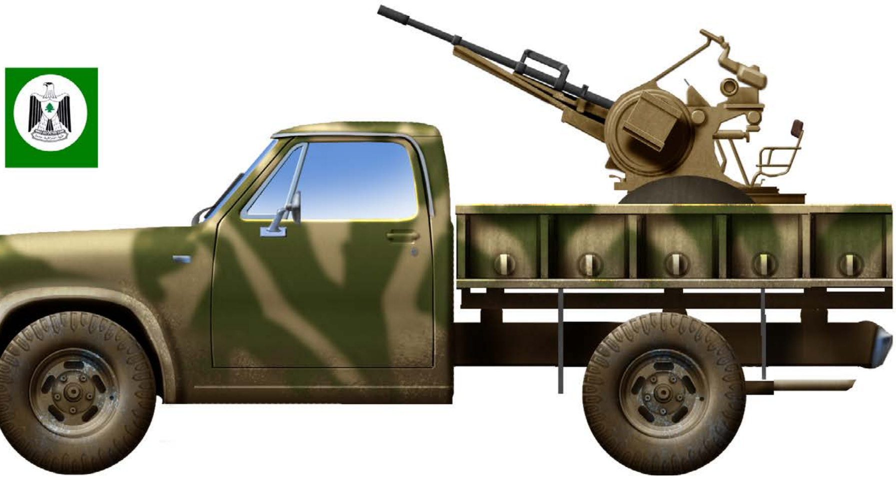
B Company of the 450th Battalion – the class of Infantry Squadron Leaders, including battalion CO, Uri Geiger, and company commanders, amongst them Nir Bar-Zohar. (via Alon Ben Moshe)

Another burned out M113 of B Company, as found after the battle in el-Bass. (via Efim Sandler)

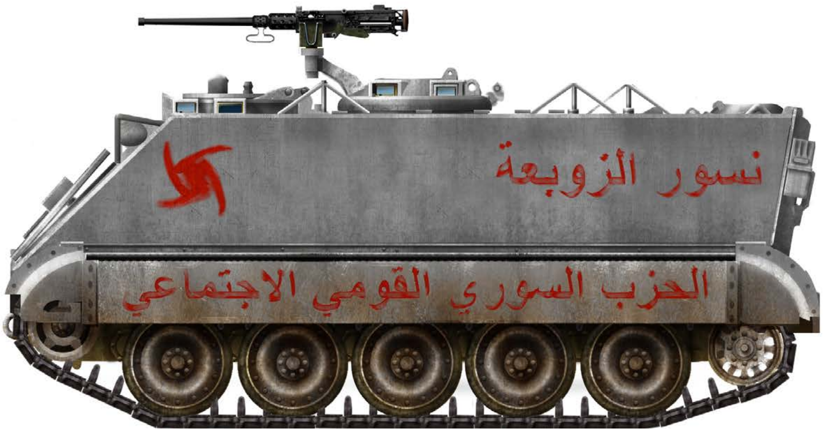
extracted with help of tanks from V Company, 429th Battalion (CO Asher Fahn): nevertheless, it had to leave behind three burning APCs of G Company.

Overall, the first day of fighting for Tyre cost the IDF a total of 11 killed and dozens of wounded. The 450th Battalion lost its commander and operations officer; the 9th Battalion lost three of its tank crews along with a team member of the 211th Brigade's Deputy Commander; the 429th Battalion lost a tank commander.

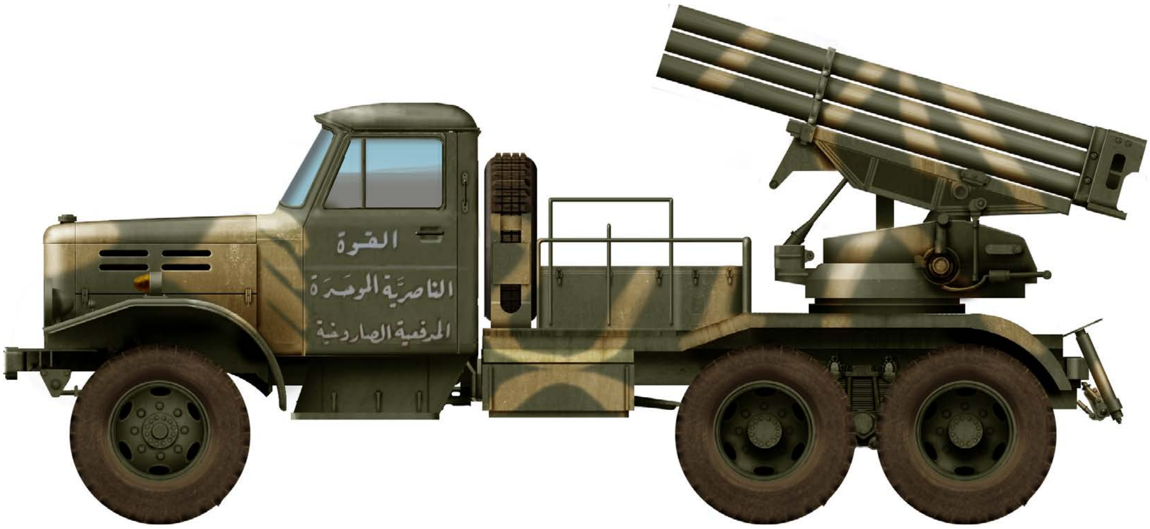
In addition to seven completely destroyed M113s and one M548, the brigade lost one tank written off, and several disabled but recovered later on. Arguably, forward elements of the 211th Armoured Brigade had managed to cross the Litani River east of the Qasmiyeh bridge, and then went into a night bivouac about 6km further north, near the village of Sarafand. However, the 450th Battalion had to be pulled back to Ras al-Bayada for reorganisation and rest. That was: minus its A Company, which was given the task of leading the 126th Battalion: this element suffered the next loss, when its deputy commander was shot dead by a Palestinian sniper near the Qasmiyeh bridge. This was the highest toll in men and equipment of any IDF armoured unit since the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War – and the war had just begun.



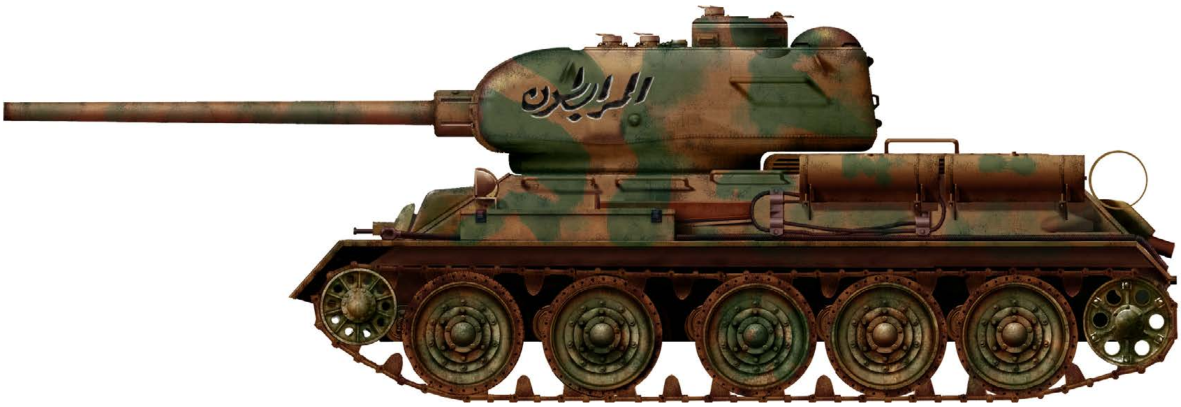
Widely used by all the factions in the Lebanese Civil War, so-called 'technicals' (utility cars or light trucks converted into combat vehicles) mounted a wide variety of armament. This is a reconstruction of a Dodge light truck from 1981, converted into a 'technical' by the militia of the (pro-Syrian) Arab Socialist Union, in Beirut. Like so many other vehicles of its size and type, it mounted a ZPU-2 14.5mm machine gun. Other armament frequently installed on such vehicles included ZPU-1s, ZPU-4s, or, the heaviest and most 'prestigious' of them all, the Soviet-made ZU-23-2 twin 23mm antiaircraft gun. Because all factions were prone to shoot first and ask questions later, large markings identifying the owning party were usually applied to the front, rear and sides of the vehicle. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



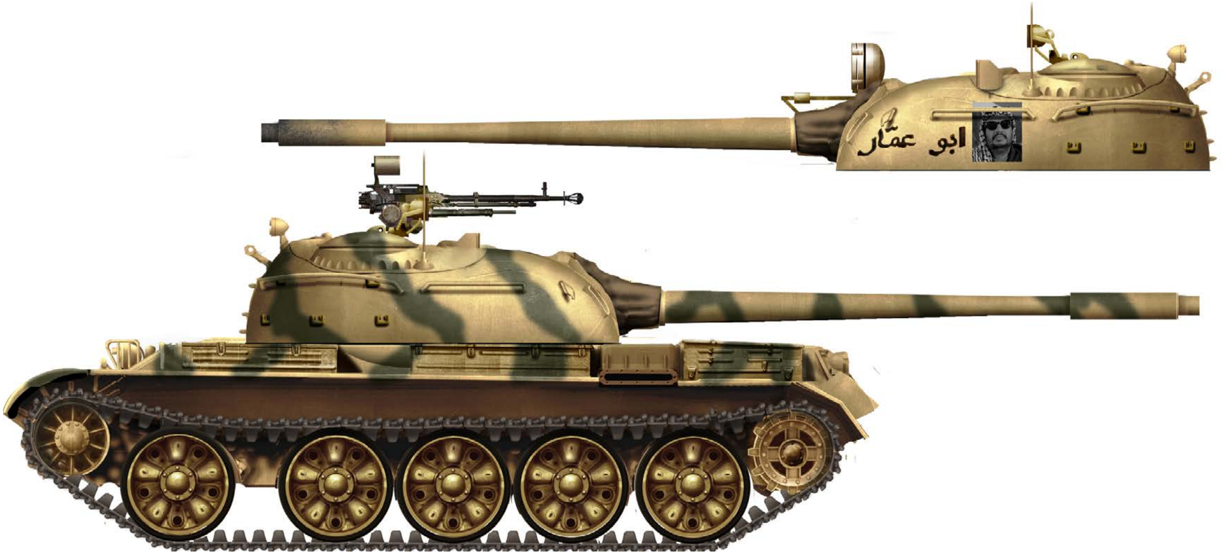
The Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party was one of the fiercest opponents of the PLO and Amal – but was also in a near-permanent state of war with the Phalange. In March 1982, it partnered with the Marada movement against Bashir Gemayel's forces in the Koura and Metn districts of Beirut. The heavy equipment of the SSNP mostly consisted of pieces captured or traded from the FAL and included this M113 APC. SSNP vehicles of the time did not wear regular camouflage patterns: this one was painted in grey overall, had the party emblem on the forward hull, and the slogan 'The Eagles of the Whirlwind' in Arabic. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



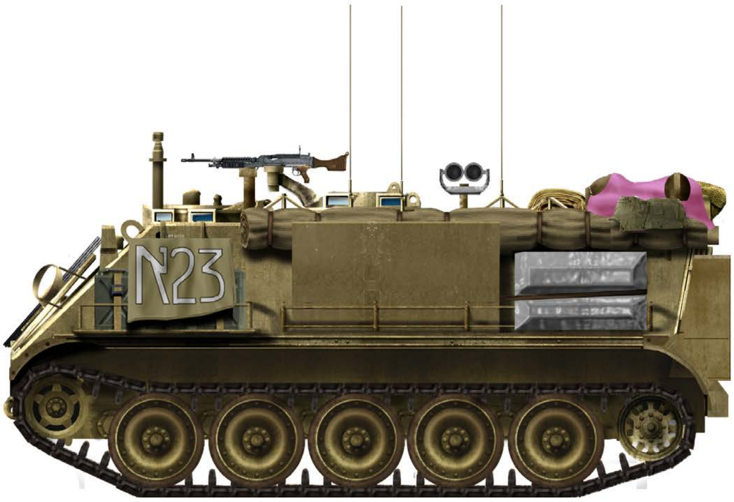
Multiple rocket launchers of 107mm and 122mm calibre were some of the most potent weapons of the Lebanese Civil War. Although a single reload of their rockets was priced at around US$20,000 in the early 1980s, they were acquired and deployed in large numbers by several parties. Most widespread were Soviet-supplied BM-11s and BM-21s: this BM-11 was mounted on a South Korean Isuzu HTS-12G truck and operated by the Popular Nasserist Organisation in early 1982. Although a PLO ally, the militia frequently clashed with the Palestinians, including on 16 May 1982 in Sidon following the assassination of a senior PNO official. Whenever a vehicle of this kind was captured by one or the other party, it almost always retained its livery: at most, markings were replaced by those of the new owner. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



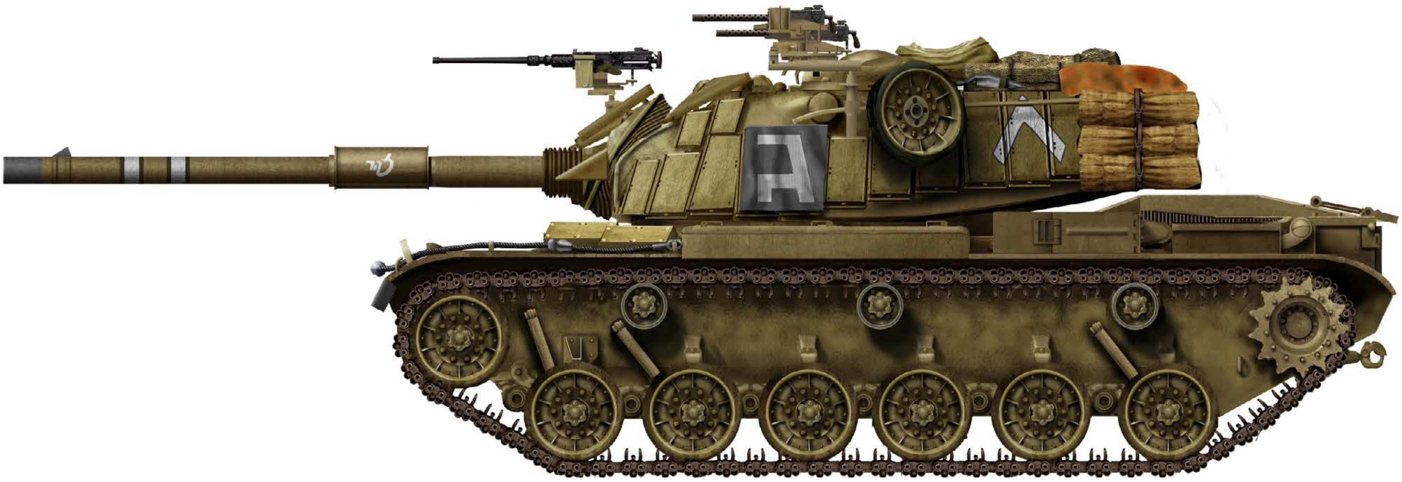
Between 1978 and 1981, the PLO and the PLA acquired a total of 80–85 Soviet-made T-34/85 tanks, of which around 60 were in operational condition by June 1982. The majority of these were assigned to the three regular battalions of Fatah, each of which received 12 and operated them in combination with artillery and antiaircraft artillery formations of similar size. A few of the Fatah/PLO T-34/85s may have had a camouflage pattern applied over their original dark green overall livery but wore no other markings. The PLA operated a similar number of the same type, though mostly from surplus stocks of the Syrian Arab Army. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



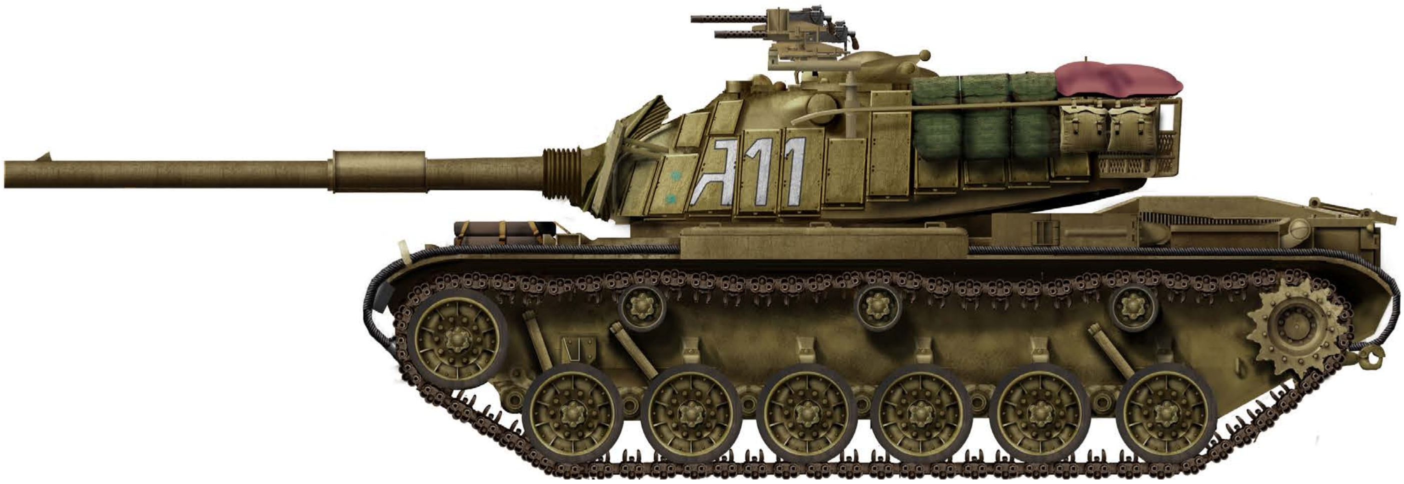
The T-55 – mostly from Czechoslovak licence production – was not only the primary MBT of the mechanised infantry formations of the Syrian Arab Army, but also the most powerful tank operated by any of the Palestinian factions in Lebanon in 1982. About 20 Libyan-donated examples were acquired by the PFLP, which equipped a full regiment with them. As far as is known from the few available photographs, they were painted in yellow sand overall and most retained that livery for a while after their arrival. Others had a disruptive camouflage pattern in wide stripes and splotches in olive green. Like the PLO T-34/85s, they rarely wore any kind of artwork or slogan, but large posters of Yasser Arafat were applied from time to time, as shown in the inset. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



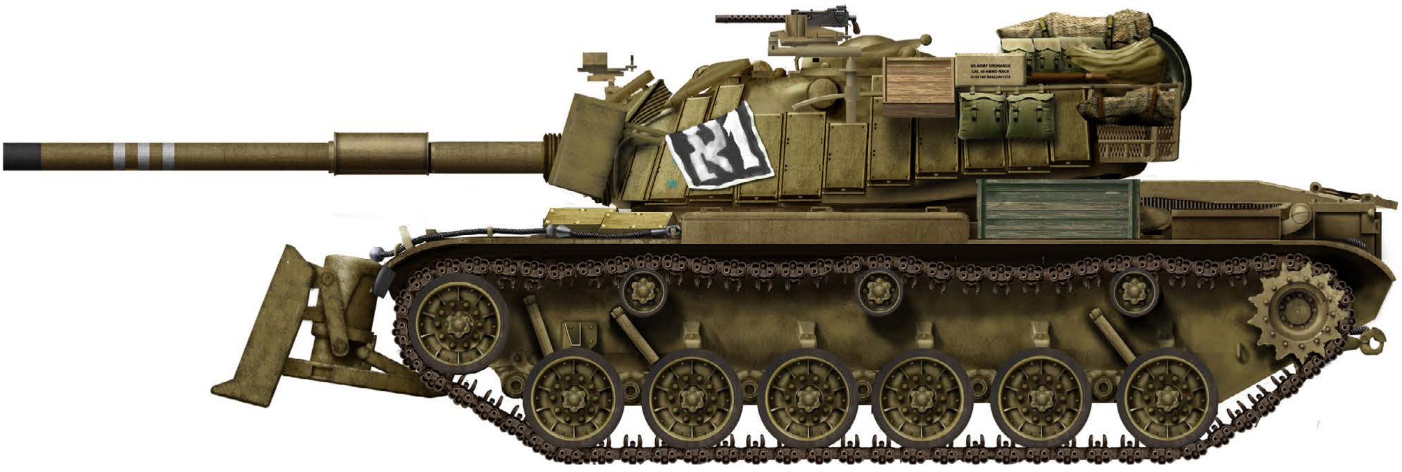
All the command APCs of IDF mechanised units in June 1982 wore tactical designation starting with 'א' ('Alef' in Hebrew) and ℵ23 was the vehicle of the Intelligence Officer of the 188th Armoured Brigade. With the same functions existing at the brigade- and battalion level, the same logic was applied, but with the first digit being 1 (for example: 'ℵ10' for Battalion CO, 'ℵ11' for Battalion Deputy Commander, and 'ℵ18' for the Battalion Doctor etc.). APCs operated by intelligence officers were always equipped with powerful binoculars and additional communication devices – both for long-range and encrypted communication), with extensive stocks of maps, and related presentation accessories such as boards and easels. Note the high visibility panel carried on the upper rear of the vehicle to aid aerial recognition. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



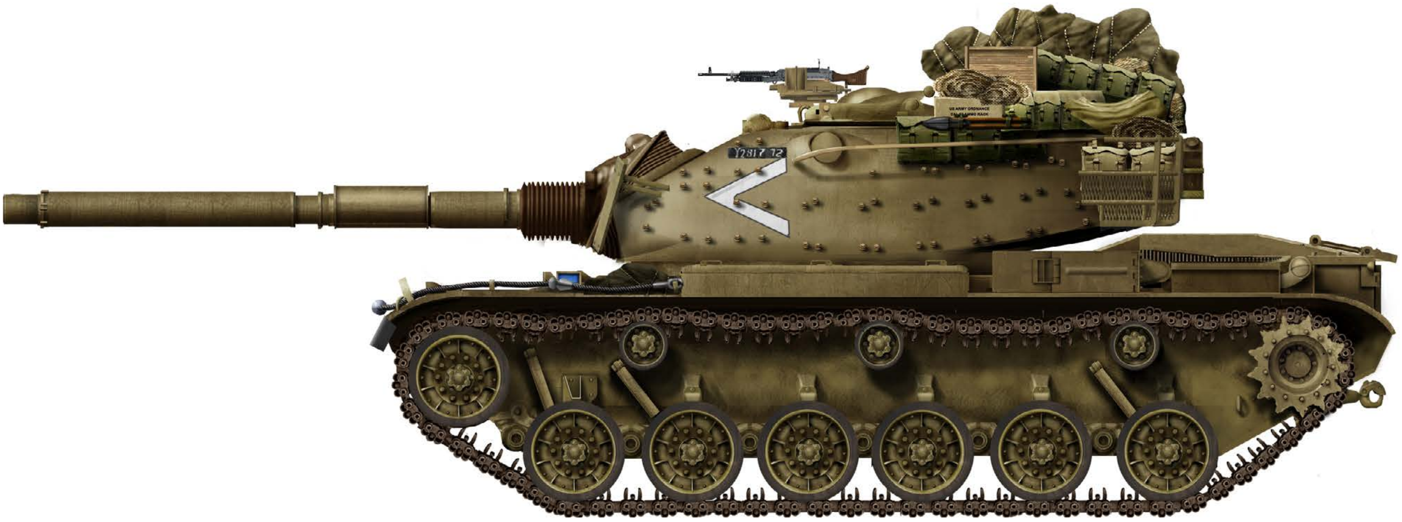
A Magach-6B commanded by Asher Fahn, CO V ('Vulcan') Company, 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade. Having already received its new vehicles, V Company was halfway through converting to Merkava Mk 1 when deployed for Operation Peace for Galilee. Thus, it went into the war using a few of its remaining tanks, and some drawn from Z Company (which is why some of its Magachs still wore the insignia of the latter). This tank was destroyed on 7 June 1982, when it hit an IED during the attack on Burj el-Chmali. The crew managed to evacuate with only minor injuries. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



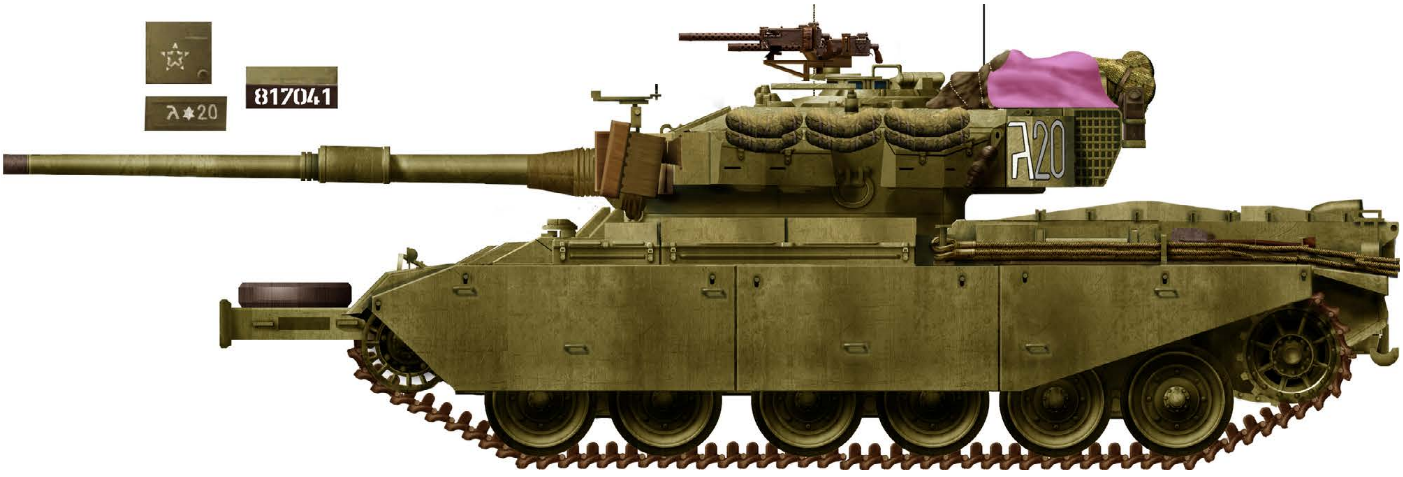
This was the Magach-6B operated by Tzvika Yakovson, Deputy CO of the 795th Battalion during the Awali landing on 7 June 1982. Commanded by Yossi 'Chich' Morag, the 795th Battalion of the 844th Armoured Brigade was a unit staffed by instructors of the School of Armour, usually providing basic training to conscripts of the Armoured Corps. It landed a force of 19 tanks, consisting of a mixture of Magach-6Bs, Magach-6Rs and Sho't Kal Gimels. Another combined force of Magach and Merkava tanks from the same unit followed overland. Most of the tank commanders of the 795th Battalion were officers, and all crew members were certified tank commanders. Unsurprisingly, their vehicles wore regular tactical insignia, but most lacked battalion and brigade signs. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



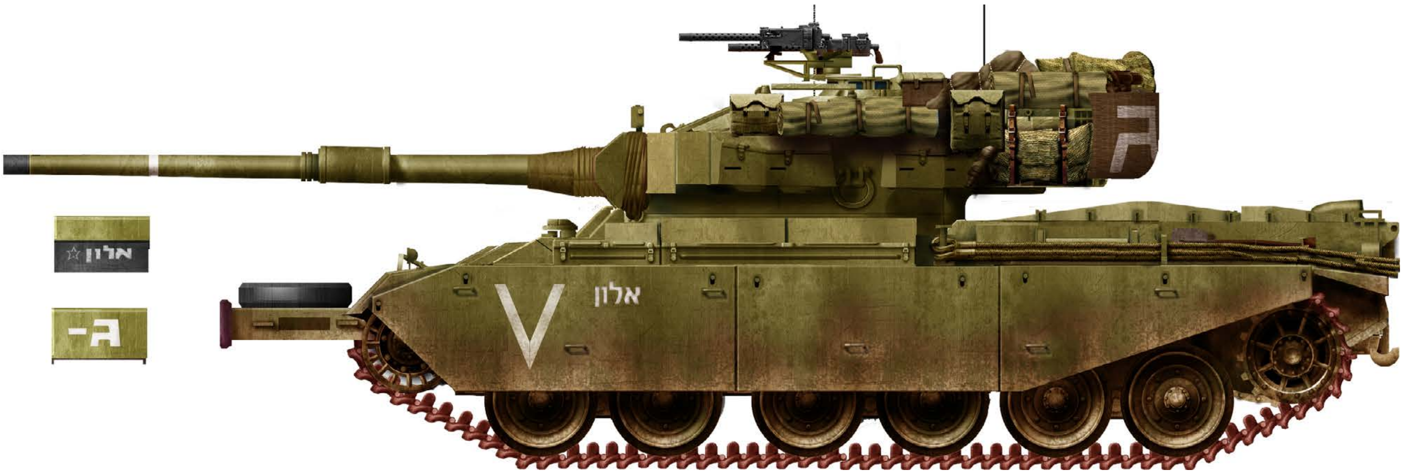
This Magach-6B, equipped with a dozer blade, was operated by K ('Kfir') Company, 9th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade. This was one of the oldest armoured units of the IDF, transferred from the 14th Brigade to the 211th only in late 1980. The battalion was still operating Magach-6Bs (with gun stabiliser) and actually planned to switch to Merkava Mk 1s, but instead went into the war using its old vehicles. It was one of the first battalions to enter Lebanon, early on 6 June 1982. Dozer blades were a rare sight and deployed only on paved roads: whenever there was a more complex obstacle, commanders preferred professional dozer operators of the Engineer Corps. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



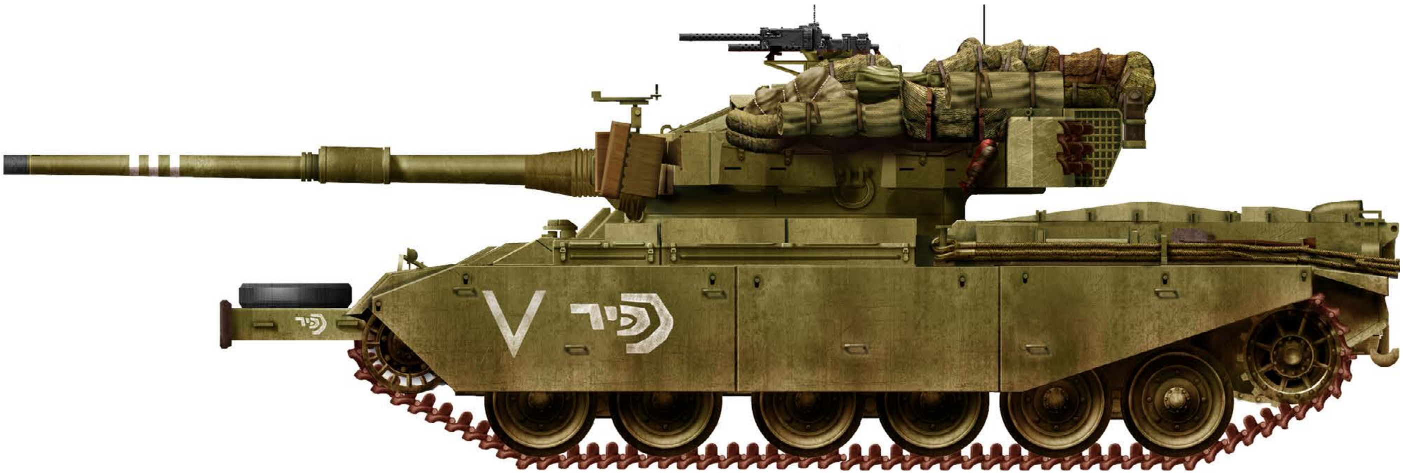
The M60A3 TTS – designated the Magach-6G in IDF service – was the most modern tank in the IDF inventory as of June 1982, and operated only by one unit: Z ('Zaam') Company (CO Ronny Bert), 52nd Battalion, 401st Armoured Brigade. They were rushed into combat without ERA blocks and no smoke grenade launchers – all of which were delivered separately once the unit was already well inside Lebanon. However, they were highly valued for their thermal sights which were second to nothing in the IDF and provided a major improvement in night fighting capability. Other units of the 401st Armoured began receiving Magach-6Gs about a week later, and by the end of the year the entire brigade – and the 14th Brigade – were equipped with this version. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



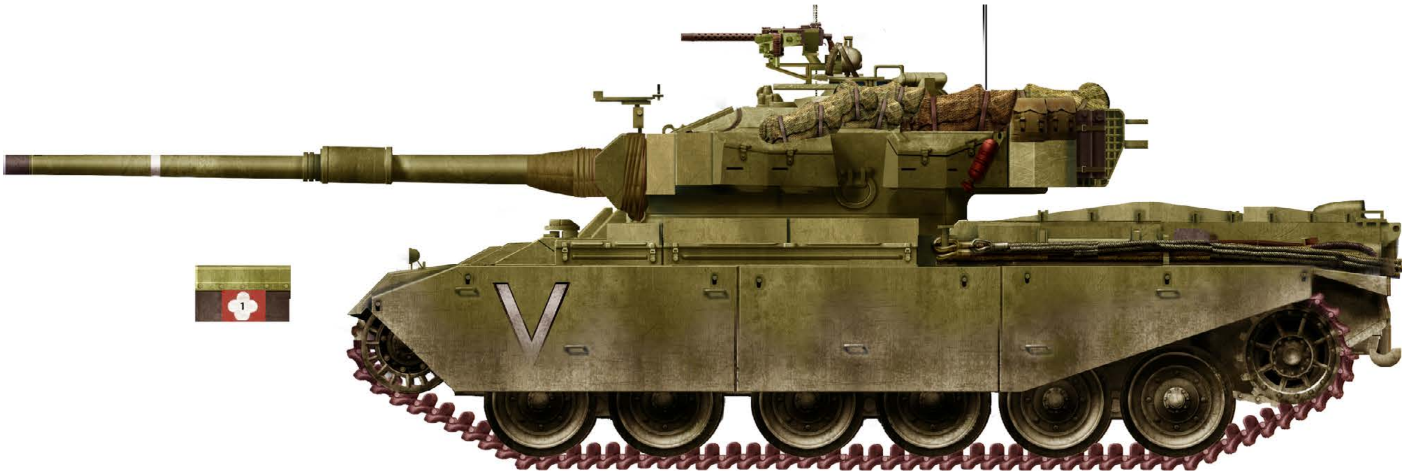
This Sho't Kal Gimel (registration 'צ 817041') was the personal mount of the CO of 188th Armoured Brigade, Colonel Meir Dagan, during June 1982. The tanks of brigade COs usually had a crew of five, including the officer, driver, gunner, loader and another officer from the Brigade HQ (commonly Operations Officer or the Chief-of-Staff). The loader in such crews was usually a certified tank commander who could take over if the Brigade CO switched to another vehicle, and was qualified to guide the driver or take care of required maintenance and supplies. The Brigade CO's tank always wore all tactical insignia except for those of the battalion and company. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



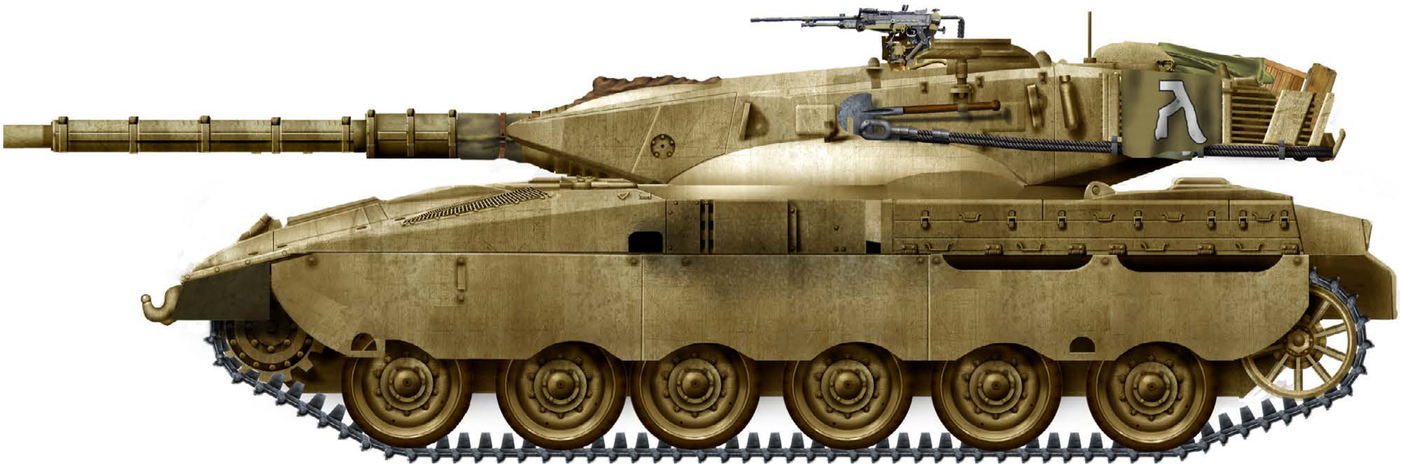
This was the Sho't Kal Gimel of Efi Margi, CO of the A ('Alon') Company, 53rd Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade – the leading force of the 36th Division up to the bridge at Aqiya, where the unit switched places with the 71st Battalion (CO Eyal Ben-Reuven). Like a few other tanks of that brigade, this vehicle was equipped with a battering ram, perhaps the most popular engineering device of the war: its design was based on the experience from Operation Stone of Wisdom, when the task of moving things out of the way was frequently prioritised over mine-clearing. All tanks of A Company, 53rd Battalion, had a small inscription on the side of their 'bazooka skirts' and front fenders, and all were equipped with smoke grenade launchers. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



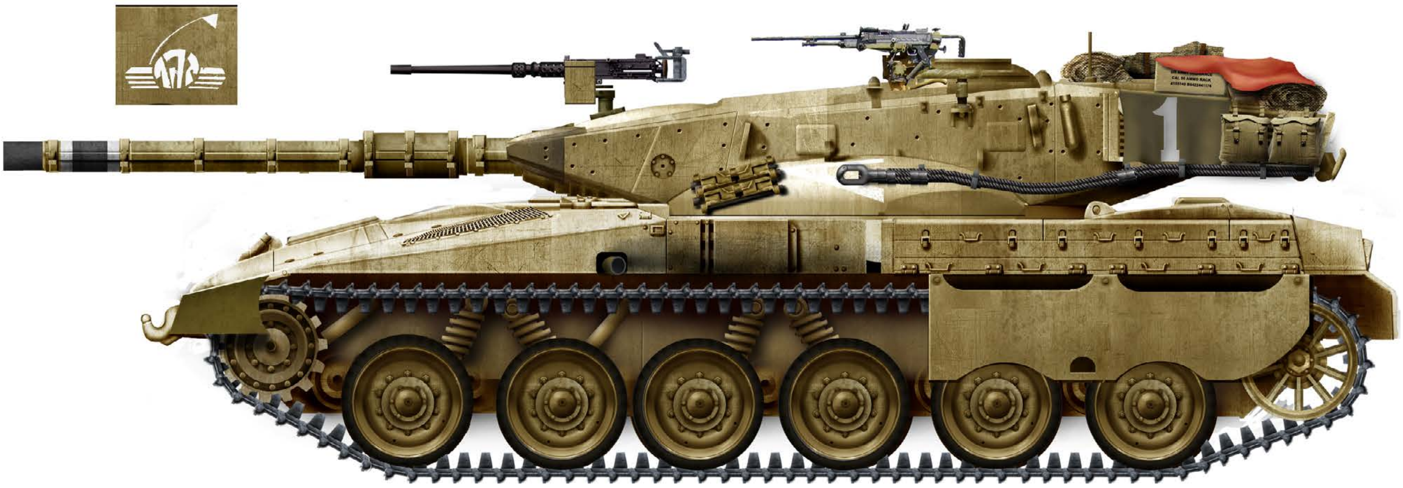
This Sho't Kal Gimel was the personal mount of Amnon Leibovich, CO of K ('Kfir') Company, 71st Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade. Tanks of this unit took part in the recovery efforts for the 51st Battalion of the 1st Golani Infantry Brigade from the minefield near Tibnit, when the 71st Battalion was directed to flank Sidon and suffered its first casualties of the war, which also resulted in the downing of a Bell 212 helicopter. The tank bore K Company's large emblem applied on the bazooka skirts, and a small one on the battering ram. Other vehicles of this company had the unit logo applied on the box for the telephone on the rear hull, right next to the star of the 188th Armoured Brigade. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



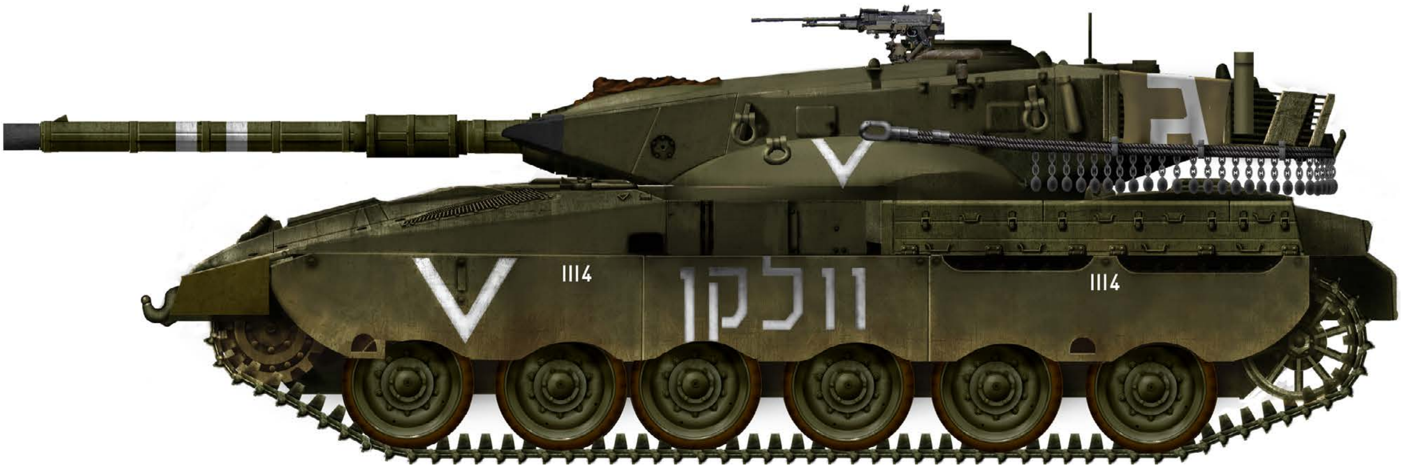
This Sho't Kal-Alef was assigned to the 275th Battalion, 847th (Reserve) Armoured Brigade, and formed part of the task force sent to mop up the Iron Triangle in cooperation with the 165th Infantry Brigade. Initially, this battalion was under the direct control of Northern Command, but after the takeover of Tyre, it was rerouted to Sidon. The other two battalions of the 847th Brigade – the 293rd and 294th – were both assigned to the 91st Division. Generally, tanks of the 275th Battalion wore no artworks or other insignia apart from the brigade tactical sign – a white mark on a red square (shown inset). (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



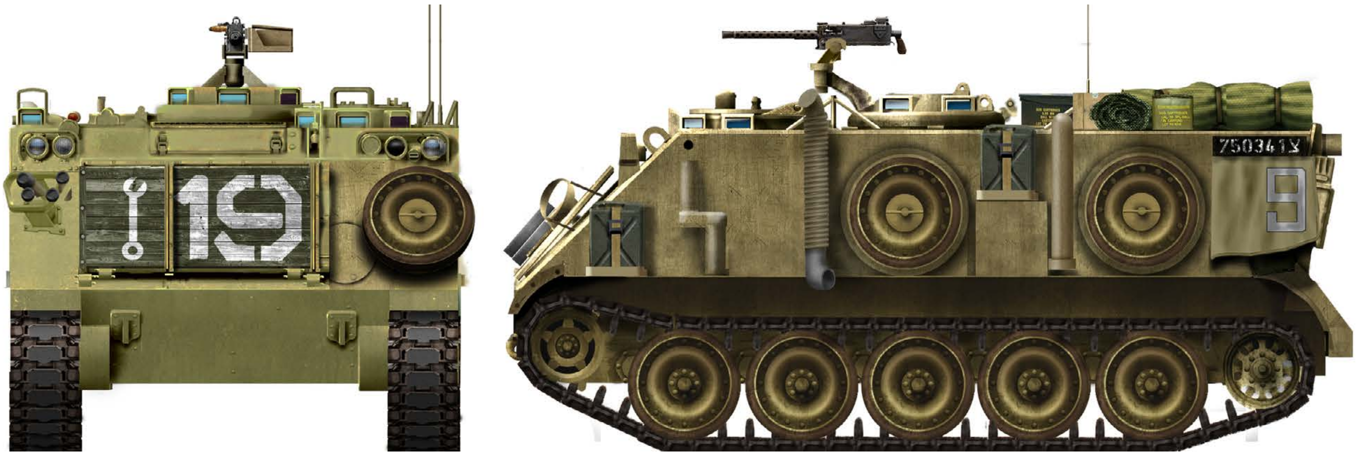
G Company of the 126th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade (CO Yadid Gilad) was the training element of that unit: its Merkava Mk 1 tanks were used to convert crews to the new type before the company was mobilised and rushed into combat in Lebanon. The 126th led the advance on Tyre during the morning of 6 June, and managed to bypass the town, reaching the bridge at Qasmiyeh on the Litani River and crossing it around 1800hrs. As they were 'training tools', Merkava Mk 1s of the 126th Battalion wore next to no insignia atop of their UA902 sand grey colour (applied overall, as standard across the IDF in the late 1970s and early 1980s), and had only one machine gun installed in front of the tank commander's position. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



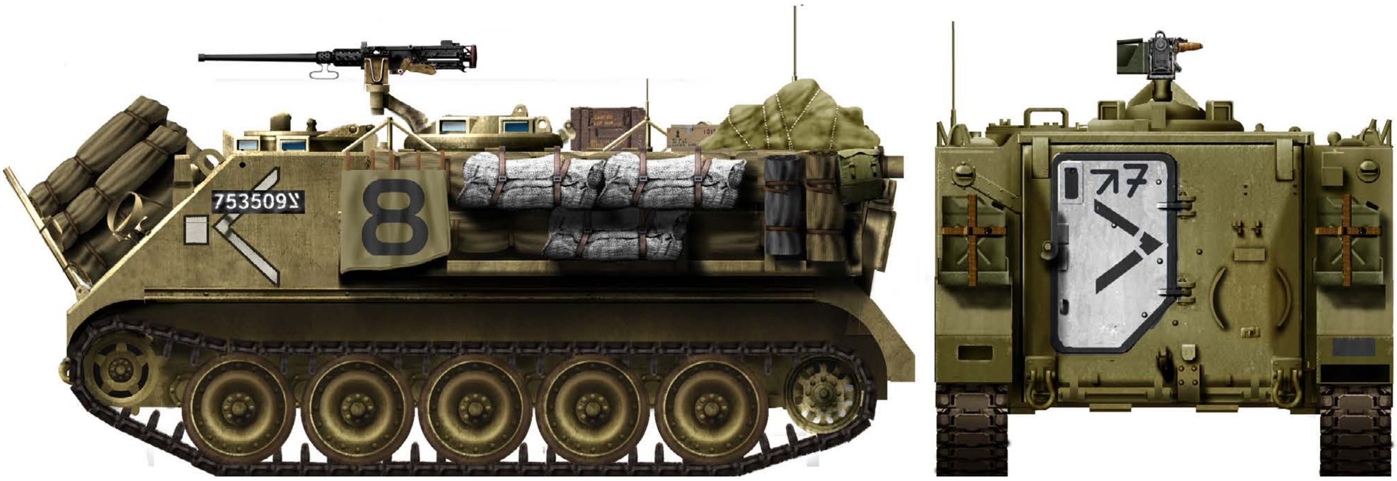
This Merkava Mk 1 was commanded by Ilan Friedland, CO of Z ('Zoher') Company, 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade; only the second IDF unit to receive this type, in 1982. By June 1982, the 126th Battalion was fully reequipped with Merkavas, the 429th Battalion had two companies (H and Z) of this type, and one (V) still operating Magach-6Bs – while its 9th Battalion was still operating Magach-6Bs. The Merkava proved better protected than the Magach-6s, but was also very heavy, underpowered, and suffered from numerous teething issues. Moreover, all Merkava-equipped units had to be augmented by units still equipped with Magachs or Sho'ts because dedicated engineering equipment was not available yet. The majority of Merkavas involved in Lebanon during June 1982 wore regular tactical insignia with company emblems applied to the rear hull: some of 211th Brigade's vehicles had that unit's tactical sign ('11') replaced by a new one as shown inset. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



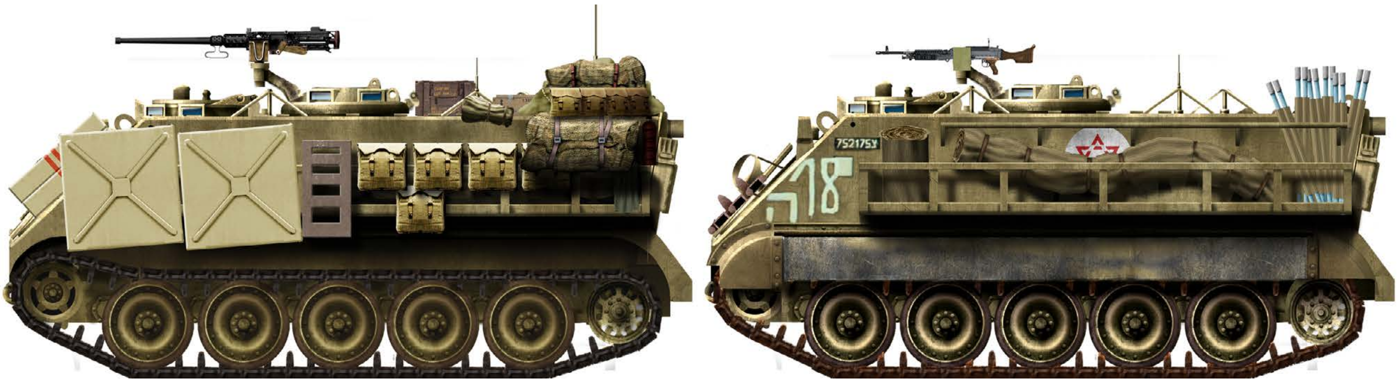
Delivered to the IDF just days before the June 1982 war, this Merkava Mk 1 – assigned to Ido Mazursky, CO of V ('Vulcan') Company, 77th Battalion, 7th Armoured Brigade – was one of the first to wear the new overall livery in khaki green. Originally deployed to Qlaya during the night of 4 to 5 June, the 77th Battalion joined the 188th Armoured Brigade, and then became involved in fighting for Marjayoun before crossing the border to secure the bridge at Khardaleh while supervised by the 769th Brigade. Due to the lack of engineering equipment, the unit then hit a minefield. Generally, vehicles of V Company wore only the usual tactical insignia: the company commander's Merkava was the only example to have additional markings on the side skirts. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



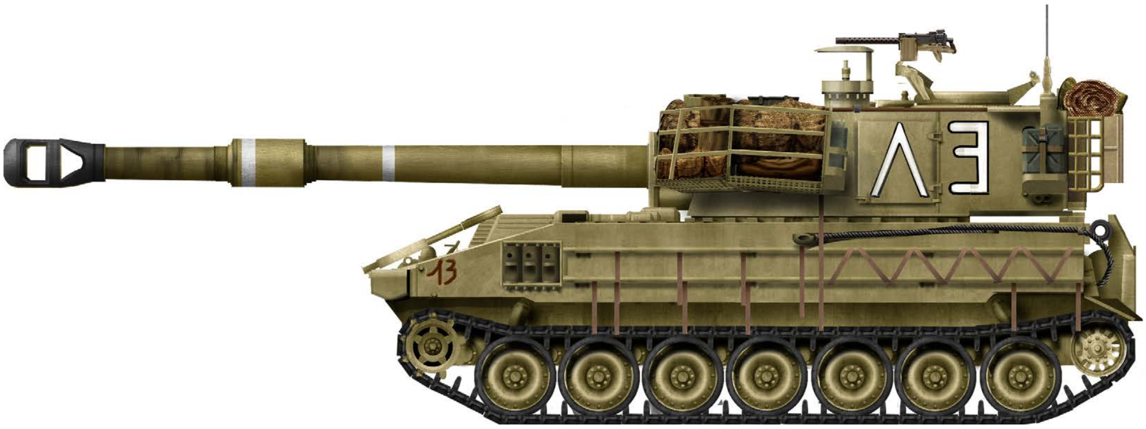
Each mechanised company of the IDF in the early 1980s had a dedicated technical team commanded by a certified squad leader, and operated either a basic M113 APC or a half-track carrying the designation '9' – which stood for HATAP ('Hulya Technit Plugatit' in Hebrew). The equipment carried by the vehicle could vary according to the specific needs, and could be adjusted depending upon the level of command and demands. For example, it could include toolboxes, spare sprocket or wheel holders, welding stations and others. At the battalion level, there was an Ordnance Corps Platoon, equipped with a mixture of vehicles marked with '19', including an M113 Fitter equipped with a manipulator arm, which was still rare as of 1982 and usually reserved for vehicles of the divisional logistic units or maintenance centres. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



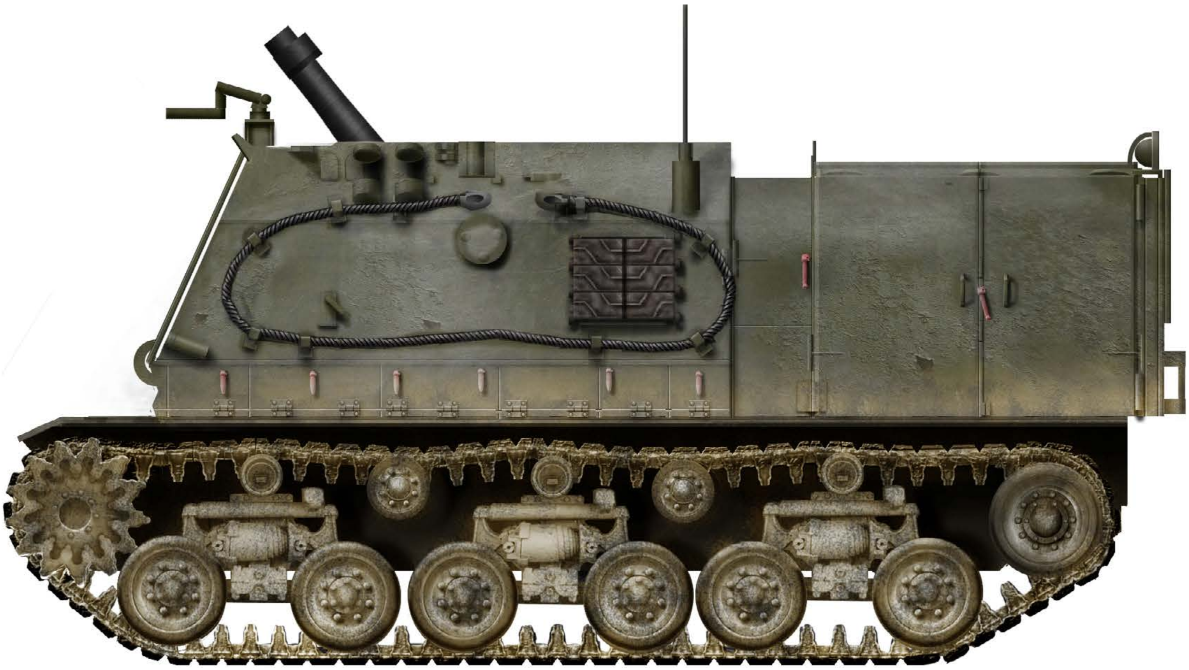
This was the M113 of Platoon Leader Amiram Te'ena, of the Fire Support Company, 50th Battalion, 35th Paratrooper Brigade, when it landed at Awali, on 6–7 June 1982. A total of 67 M113s of this unit arrived during the first two waves of the assault: they were followed by an additional party that travelled along the coastal road, under the control of the 91st Division. Vehicles of the fire support companies were usually marked by platoon numbers 5 to 8: 5 for jeeps of the scout platoon, 6 for APCs of the demolition platoon, 7 for APCs of the mortar platoon, and 8 for anti-tank platoon (equipped with M47 Dragon ATGMs). As in the case of the M113s of many other units, the rear doors on APCs of the 50th Battalion were always painted in white, to prevent friendly-fire incidents. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



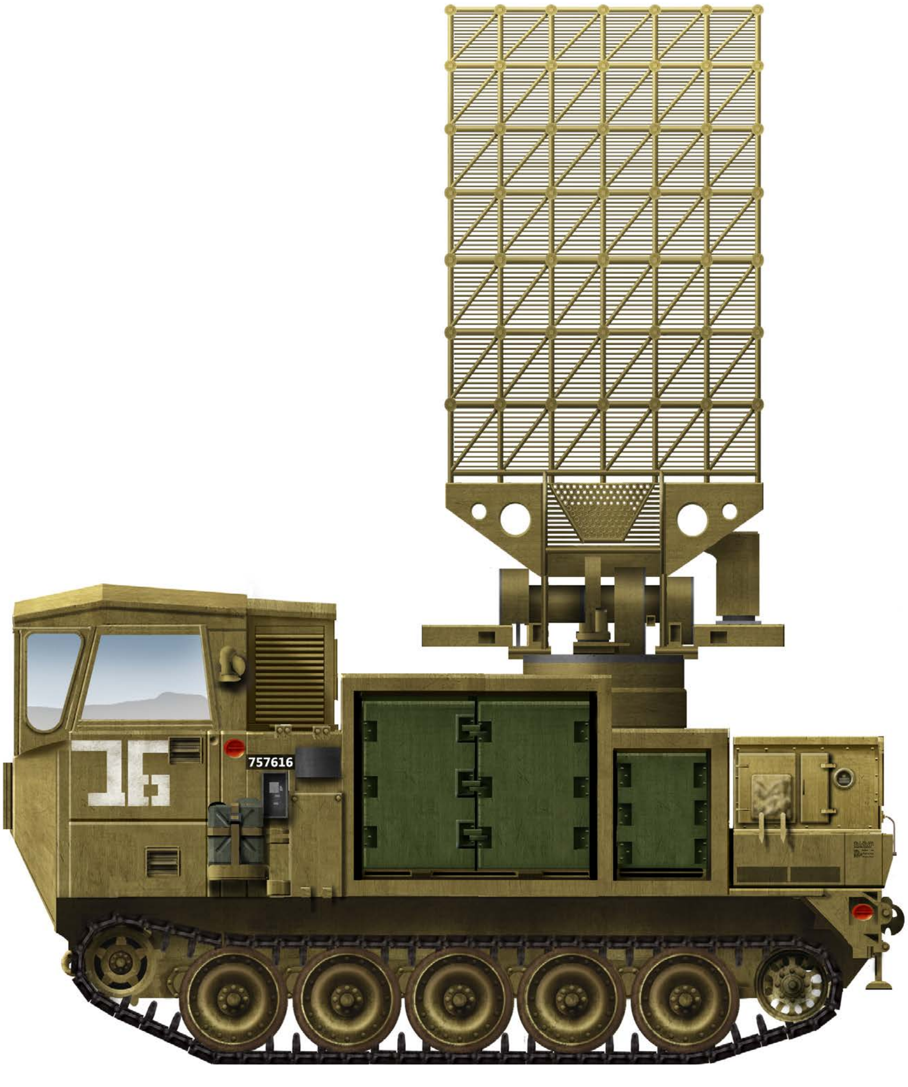
In 1982, engineers assigned to mechanised units did not have any specialist vehicles and used M113s instead. The example shown to the left was operated by the 601st Engineer Battalion, and is illustrated carrying explosives including C4, Bangalore torpedoes and regular TNT blocks attached around the hull (of course, any kind of fire was extremely hazardous for their M113s). The large boxes on the forward hull were 'sandals' used for walking over minefields. Shown to the right is the M113 'א18' assigned to the battalion medical team: each battalion had one such team, including a professional doctor, and a senior medic who usually was a platoon sergeant, mounted on one or two APCs and one or two soft-skin vehicles. Another medical team (mounted on several APCs) was assigned to each divisional medical company, which in turn was part of the divisional logistics battalion. The APCs were capable of accommodating two stretchers for casualty evacuation, and usually marked with large red Magen David roundels. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



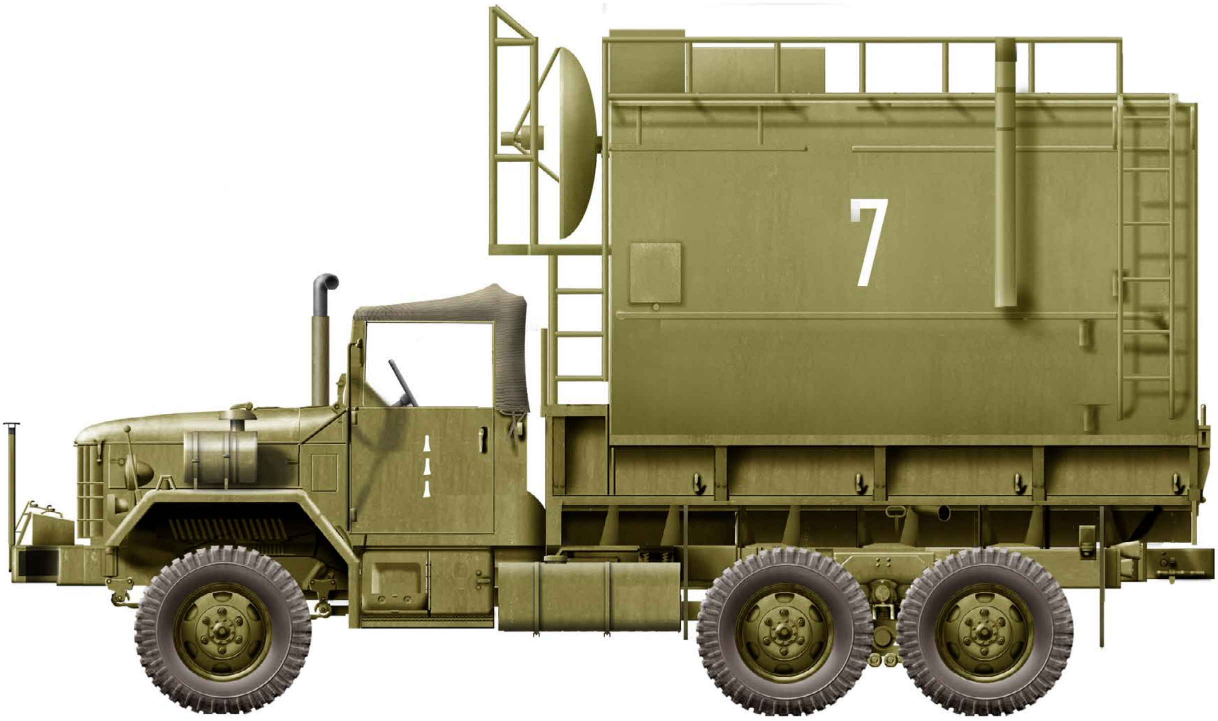
This M109A2 is of G ('Granit') Battery, 405th Battalion, 282nd Artillery Brigade – a unit that supported the advance of the 36th Division. These self-propelled 155mm howitzers formed the backbone of the IDF Artillery Corps during the war in Lebanon, equipping the 402nd, 403rd, 404th, 405th, and 411th Battalions, most of which became involved on 6 June, and some even earlier. Tactical markings of Artillery Corps vehicles were very similar to those of the Armoured Corps, and usually included a small insignia of their brigade and a battalion number (both applied on the front and the rear of each vehicle). Artillery vehicles rarely wore any kind of artwork. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



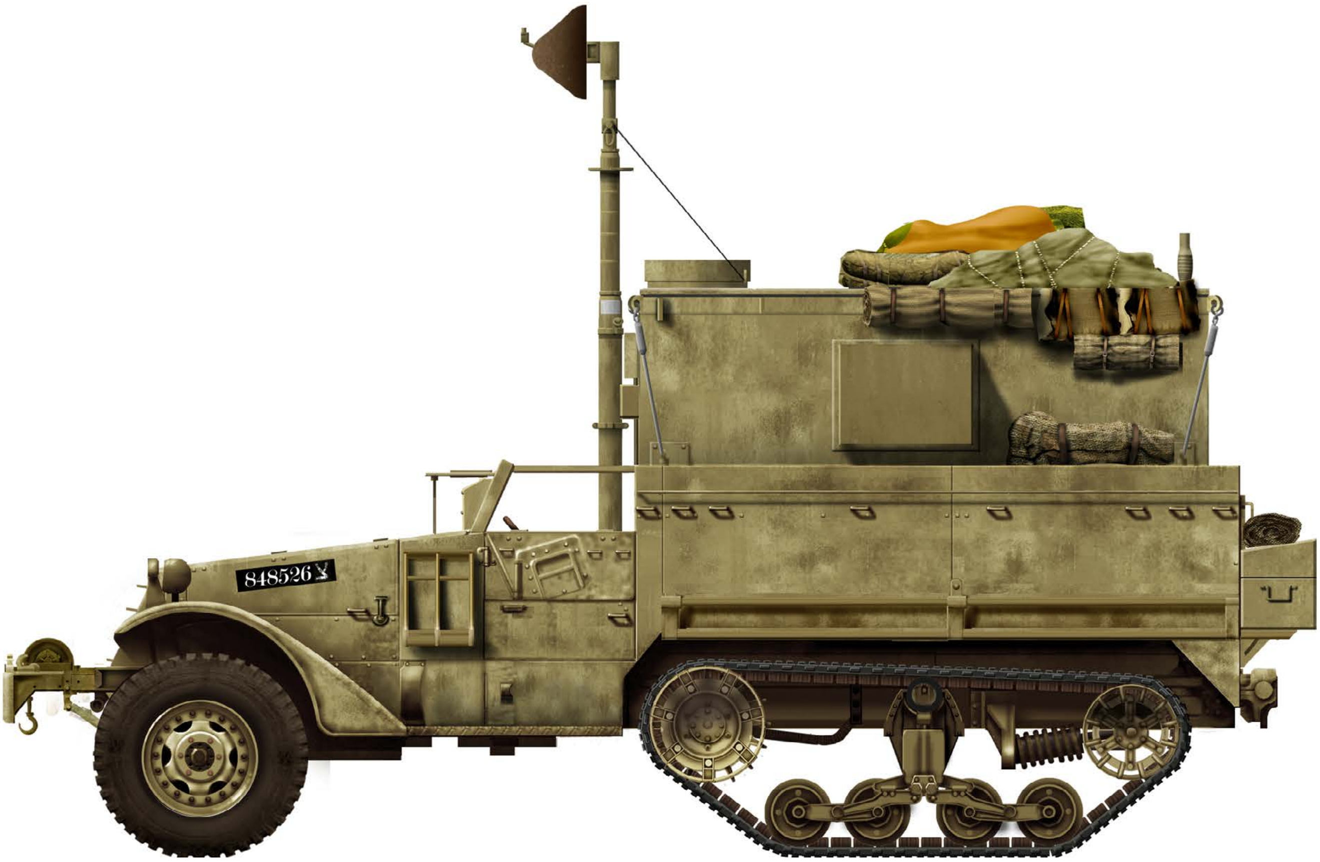
The Soltam M66 was a self-propelled artillery vehicle based on the chassis of the old M4 Sherman tank and carried a 160mm mortar. This was one of the vehicles of the 419th Battalion, 282nd Artillery Brigade. Other units equipped with M66s included the 316th, 419th, 449th, 7037th and 9222nd Artillery Brigades: all were used to great effect, especially in the mountains and densely built-up areas. The 419th Battalion first operated in the Marjayoun area, in support of the 1st Golani Infantry Brigade, then relocated to the Kfar Qouq area, in support of the 252nd Division. While wearing the regular markings of Artillery Corps units on the front and the rear, the M66 never wore any insignia on their sides. In addition to M66s, the IDF later deployed older L33 and M50 howitzers, and captured BM-24 MRLs (with the 9229th Battalion) in Lebanon during 1982. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



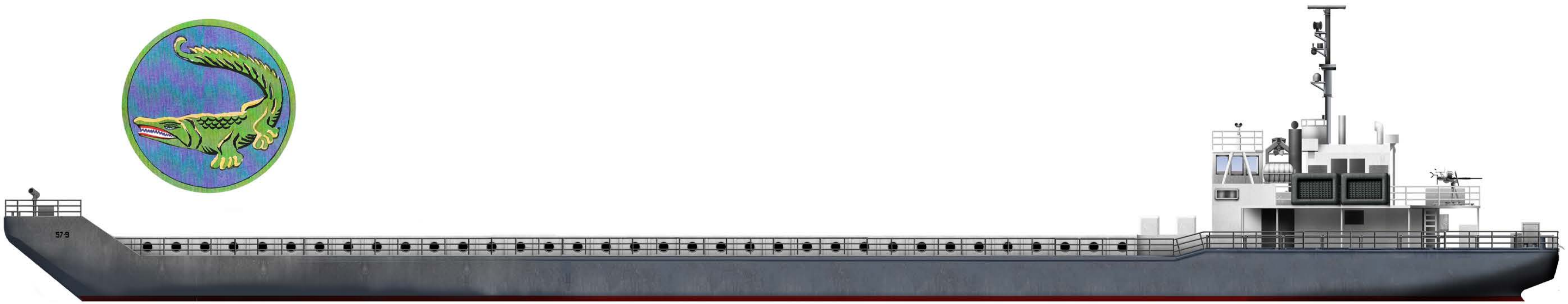
The principal artillery radar of the IDF in June 1982 was the ELTA EL-M-2310 Shilem. It was developed in Israel after the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, entered testing in 1975, and went into series production a few years later. Mounted on the M548 (which became known as the 'Alpha Carrier' within the IDF), its purpose was to track incoming shells back to their place of origin and thus enable friendly artillery to strike back in the counterbattery role. Moreover, it enabled the deployment of shells equipped with radar fuses, triggered to detonate in the air. Shilem provided very precise data out to a range of 50km and was an outstanding achievement for its time: indeed, its appearance was considered such a secret that each had to be carefully concealed whenever a Soviet reconnaissance satellite passed over. Their work was carefully supported by a special team of the 7300th Recovery and Maintenance Centre of the IDF. The system saw its first operational deployment in support of the 55th Battalion, during the landings of the 96th Division at Awali.
(Artwork by David Bocquelet)



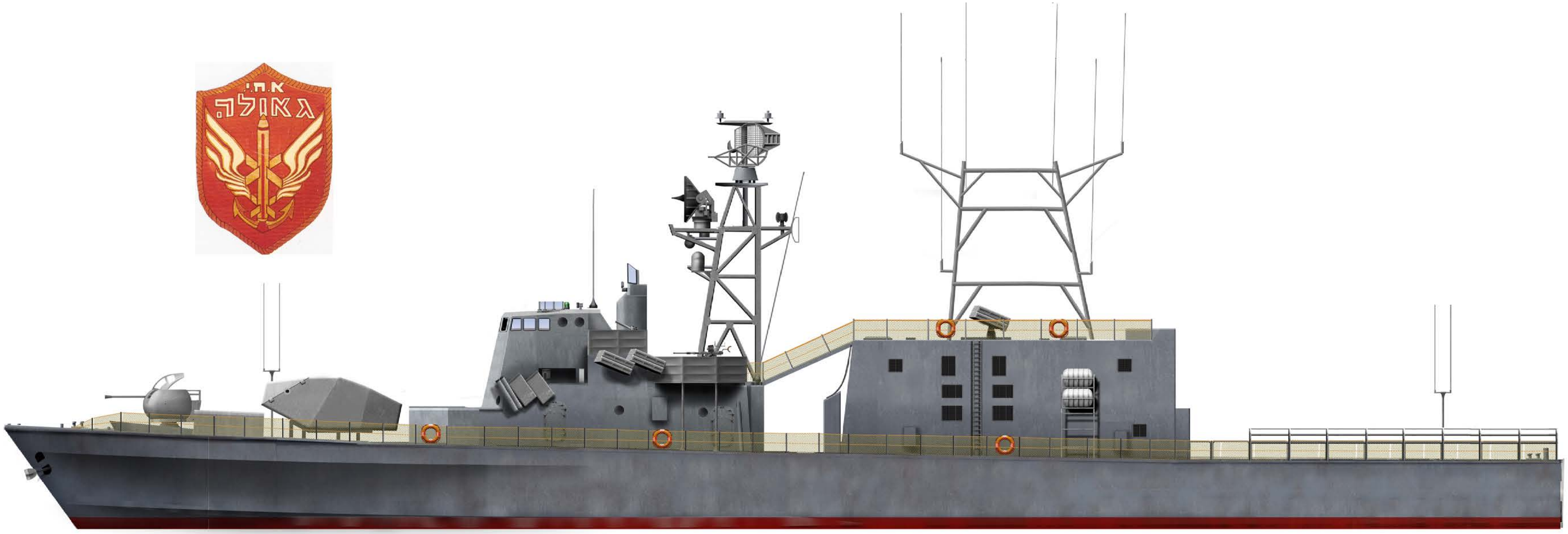
In an effort to improve the precision of its tube artillery, the Artillery Corps IDF acquired several 805G Meteorology Cabins from Japan in the early 1980s. These were used to collect meteorological data for both military and civilian applications out to a range of 30km and provide this information to each brigade. The data was collected by helium-filled balloons, equipped with the necessary sensors and a datalink transmitting to the cabin, where the David artillery computer would process it pending distribution to firing units. The system proved highly effective, capable of operations at temperatures between -100°C and +80°C, and humidity of 20–100 percent. 805G cabins could be carried by M39 Reo trucks or on M3 half-tracks. Each vehicle wore the tactical insignia of the brigade to which it was assigned. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



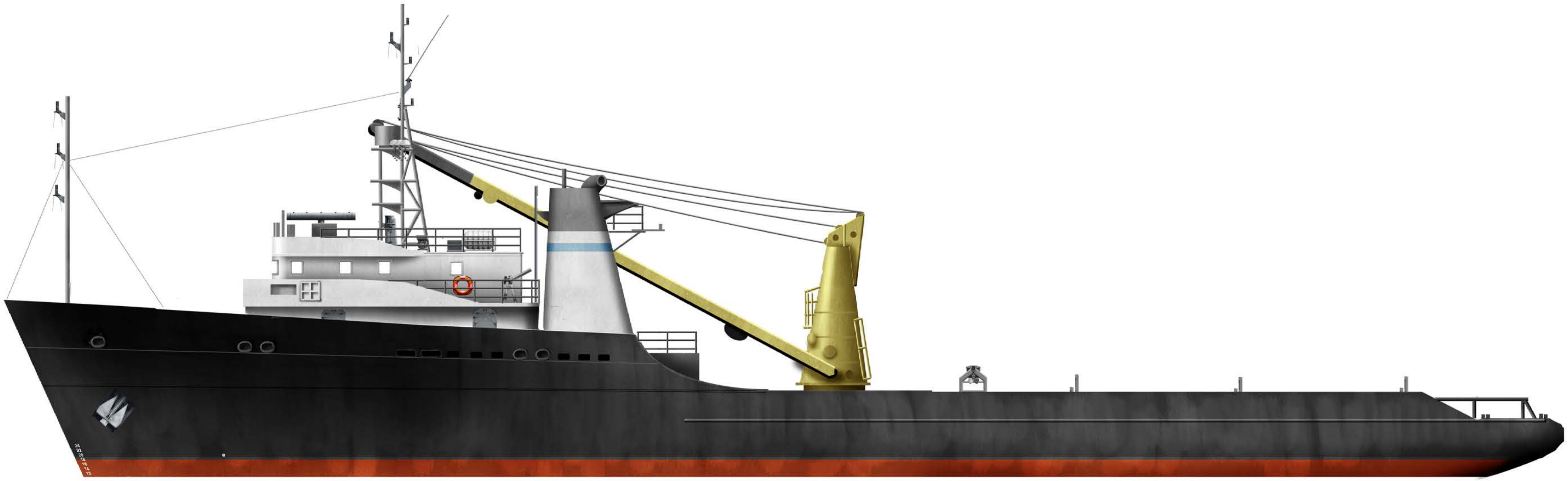
The AN/PPS-5A ground surveillance radar (nicknamed 'Keshet' in IDF service) was a mobile radar system deployed by the Signals and Electronics Corps, IDF. Entering service in 1969, it was a combat-proven solution only operated by the 414th Battalion. Its stations were either static (deployed in a fixed location along the border), or mobile (carried by a diesel-powered M3 half-track, or the locally manufactured version of the M325 Command Car). By 1982, an experienced Keshet operator was capable of pinpointing a single human from a range of 6,000 metres, and a vehicle from over 20,000 metres away, thus providing extremely precise intelligence to friendly units. Two companies of the 414th Battalion were deployed with divisional headquarters during Operation Peace for Galilee. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



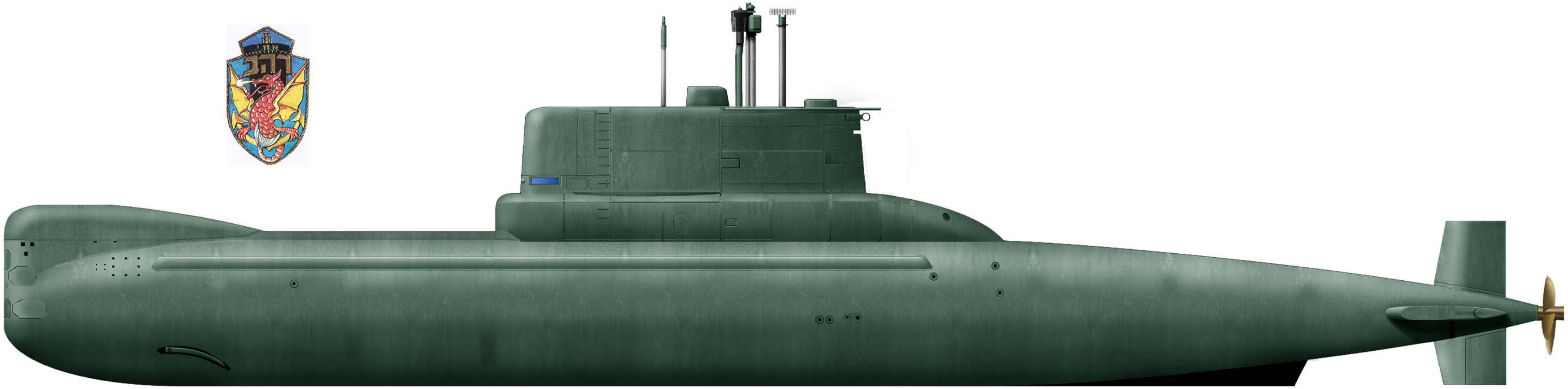
INS *Bat Sheva* (P-57), was constructed in the Netherlands in 1967 and was acquired by the IDF/Sea Corps two years later. Initially, it was homeported in Sharm el-Sheikh, and operated in conjunction with Soviet tanks captured during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It proved capable of carrying 16 T-54/55 tanks on the lower deck, and eight PT-76s on the upper deck, in addition to numerous light armoured or soft vehicles. It was also the sole vessel of the Israeli navy capable of taking two Aérospatiale SA.321 Super Frelon helicopters on the upper deck. By 1982, *Bat Sheva* was in a rather poor condition: its maximum speed was limited to 10 knots, and it was only capable of simultaneously carrying six heavy- and 16 light armoured vehicles. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



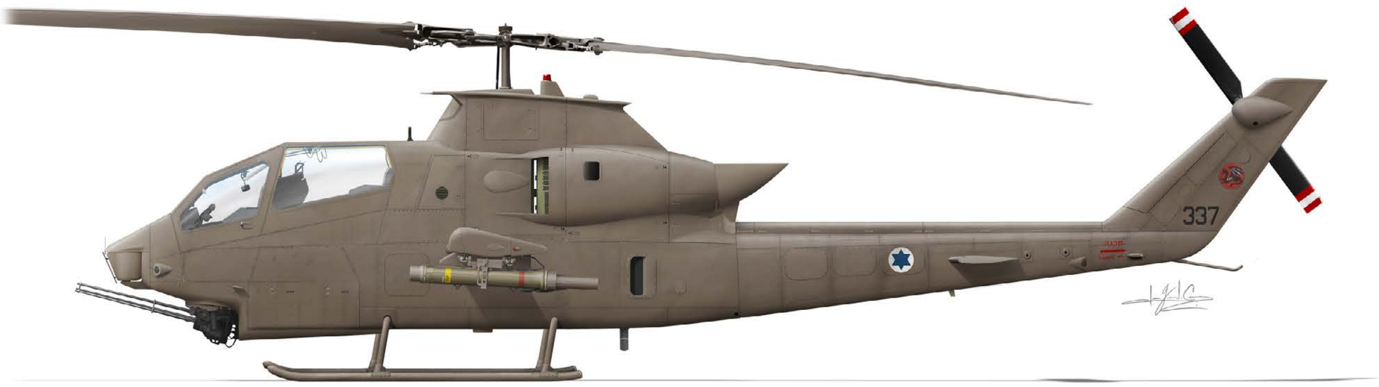
Commissioned on 27 January 1981, INS *Geula* was the second and last boat of the Aliya subclass of the Goldfinch- or Sa'ar 4.5-class of missile corvettes. It was equipped to accommodate light helicopters (mainly Bell 206s or MD.500s) and had a missile armament of four BGM-84A Harpoon and four Gabriel anti-ship missiles, and one 40mm gun. As a command and control ship for the landing operation of the 96th Division, in 1982 it was equipped with additional communication gear, most of which was installed on the mast atop the helicopter hangar, while the Harpoon launchers were removed to provide space for an auxiliary power unit. There are still very different opinions regarding INS *Geula*'s effectiveness in this role, some claiming it was overcrowded and lacking in technical capability, and others pointing out the lack of the two 76mm guns used by the Hetz subclass made it unsuitable for fire support against targets on the coast. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



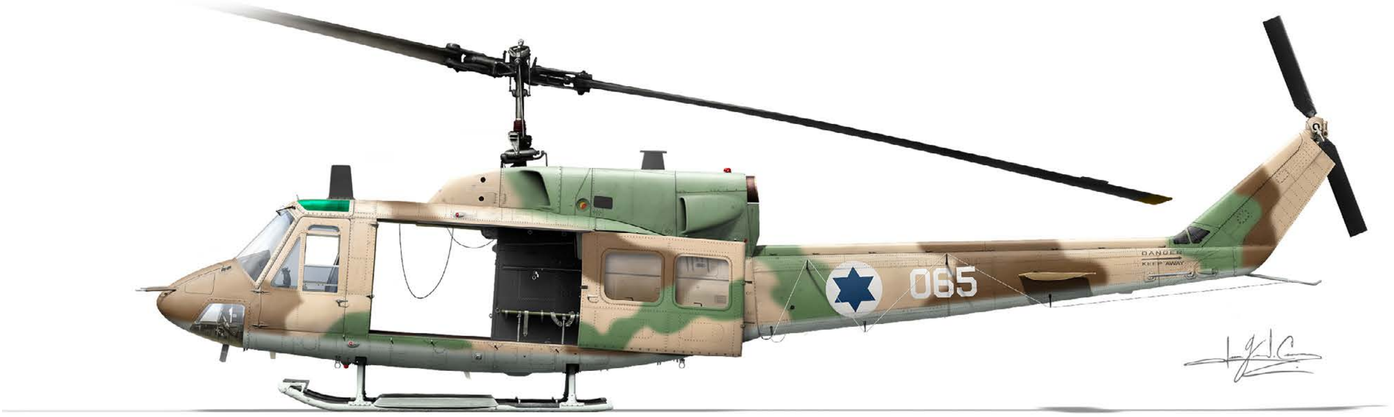
Commissioned in 1975, the INS *Maoz* was a highly-secretive support ship of the IDF/Sea Corps, almost constantly involved in clandestine operations – the very existence of which was only revealed to the public for the first time in a book by Mike Eldar in 1996 (see bibliography), triggering a major scandal and charges from the Israeli military censors. This vessel never received an official hull designation by the IDF and mimicked an 'innocent civilian' ship. The crew wore civilian clothing, and the vessel is known to have been involved in, amongst others, the recovery of INS *Gaash* from the Saudi coast, an operation in Algeria, and delivery of weapons to Gemayel's Phalange. During the invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, INS *Maoz* was initially deployed as a floating base for boats and commandos of Flotilla 13. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



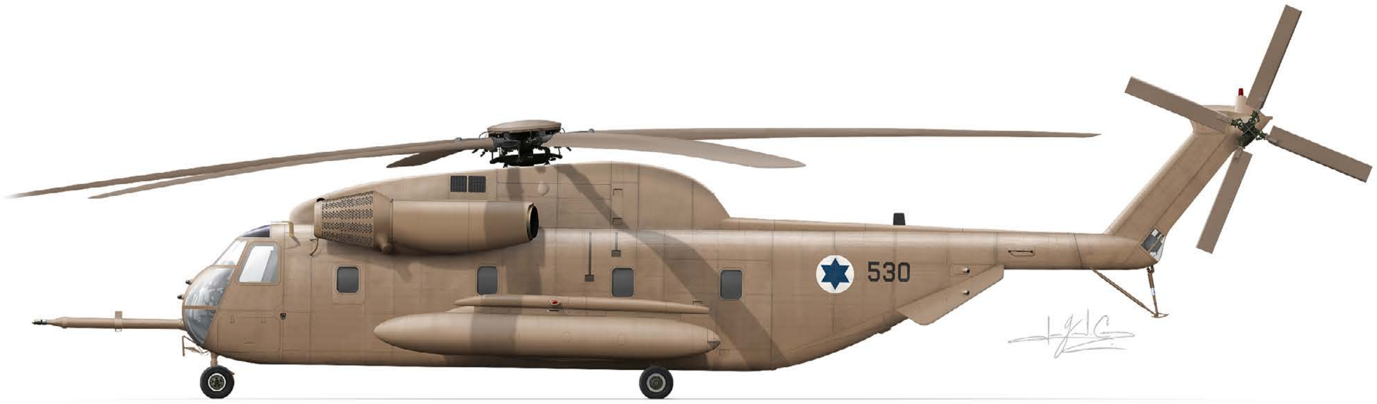
Almost as secret as INS *Maoz* were Israel's Type 240 (a slightly modified German Type 206 design) Gal-class diesel-electric attack submarines, of which INS *Rahav* was the third (and the last), commissioned on 11 December 1977. *Rahav* is known to have been one of two submarines to support the landings of the 96th Division at Awali: another boat of the same class, INS *Gal*, was part of the blocking force, positioned somewhere west of Beirut – to prevent any kind of interference from the Syrian Arab Navy. Initially, INS *Rahav* was positioned near the potential landing site in the Zahrani area, but later rerouted to Awali, and primarily tasked with artillery coordination (for which purpose it carried an officer of the Artillery Corps, IDF). The secondary mission of the boat was anti-surface action. Unlike the earlier submarines of the IDF/Sea Corps, INS *Rahav* and other Type 240 vessels never wore any kind of markings. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



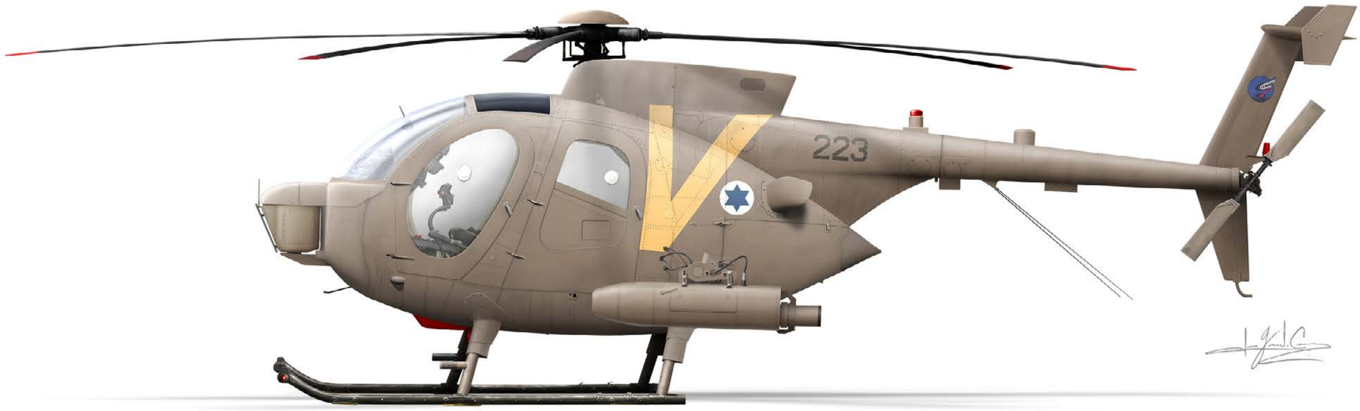
When shot down halfway between Sidon and Nabatiyah on 5 June 1982, this Bell AH-1S Cobra serial number 337, from No. 160 Squadron IDF/AF became the first combat loss of the Israeli air force since 1974. The crew was eventually concluded killed in action. By that time, the entire fleet of 38 AH-1s acquired by the IDF/AF had undergone an upgrade to the AH-1S standard at Bell in the USA and had the TOW ATGM system and exhaust diffusers. A maximum of eight BGM-71 missiles could be carried at once, but the usual warload consisted of only four. In June 1982, all the Cobras of the IDF/AF were painted in brown (FS20095) overall. The prominent yellow V identification insignia (see the MD.500 artwork on a later page) was applied only once Syrian attack helicopters appeared on the scene on 8 June. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



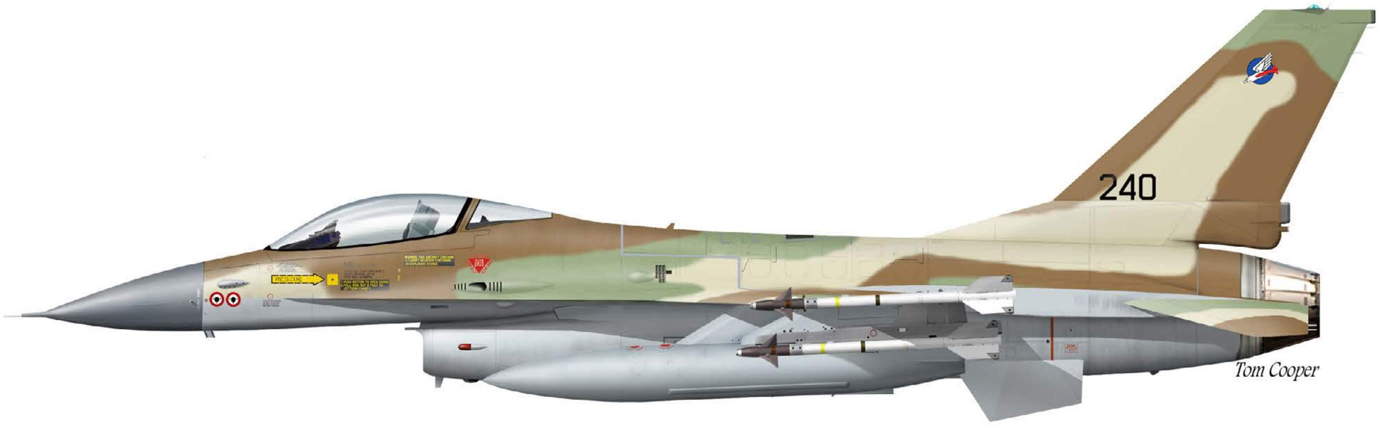
The Bell 212 fleet of the IDF/AF – which proved very successful, thanks to its greater power in comparison to the earlier Bell 205s – was operated by two squadrons. From 1979, all helicopters should have been repainted in brown (FS20095) overall, however, some seem to have retained their old camouflage pattern in sand (FS33531), tan (FS30219), and green (FS34227) on upper surfaces and sides, and pale blue (FS35622) on undersurfaces. This appears to have been the case with the Bell 212 serial number 065, shot down in the Nabatiyah area, while carrying out CASEVAC for the 71st Battalion, on 6 June 1982. All five crewmembers and passengers were killed. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



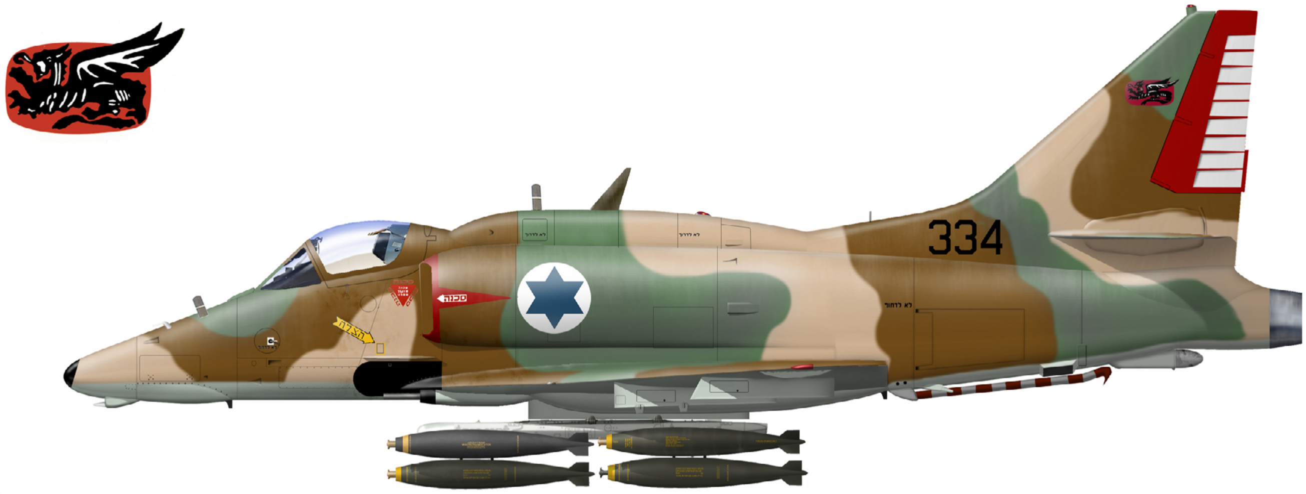
During the 1970s, the IDF/AF realised that a single-colour overall livery was more effective in concealing even its large S-65s and CH-53s when they were underway at low altitude. Correspondingly, starting in 1979 the entire fleet was repainted in brown (FS30099) overall, and went into the Lebanon invasion wearing this livery. As of 1982, the fleet of 11 S-65s and 10 CH-53As acquired since 1969 was still operated by just one unit: the Tel Nov-based No. 118 Squadron. This squadron provided sterling service by hauling troops, equipment, supplies, and vehicles in support of units advancing overland and during the Awali landings. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



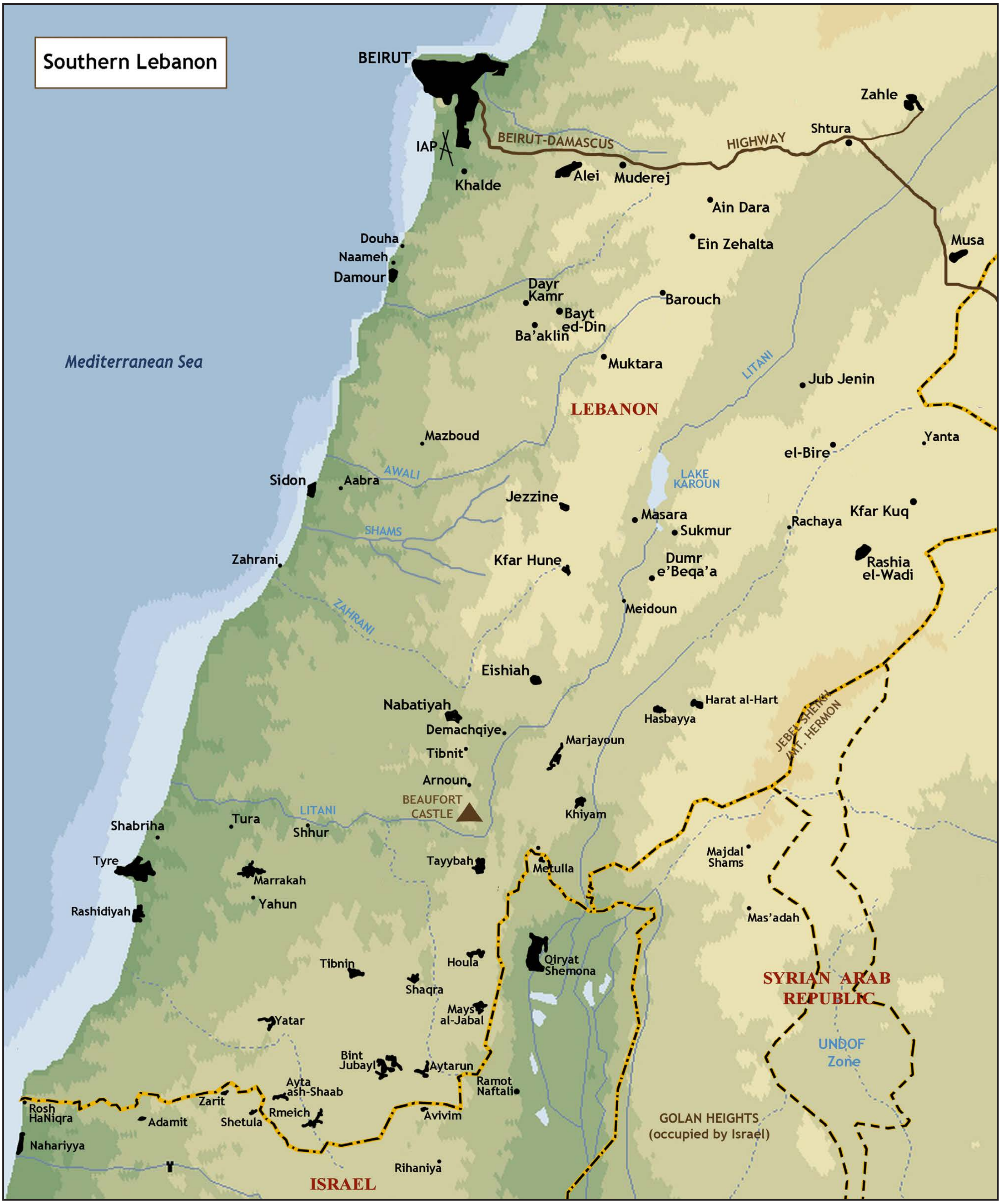
While still in the USA and awaiting delivery, the Israeli fleet of 32 MD.500 Defender attack helicopters was painted in brown (FS30099) overall. The type was initially operated in combined units, flying with AH-1s, before all were concentrated within No. 190 Squadron. It proved highly popular in service and saw intensive deployment from the beginning of the invasion in June 1982. The sole armament consisted of four BGM-71 TOW ATGMs, two of which were packed in a launcher installed on either side of the cabin. A relatively quiet engine and a five-blade rotor, combined with the nose-mounted sight, the 3,750-metre maximum range of the TOW, and the capability to hover behind obstacles while guiding missiles onto their target enabled Defenders to sneak up on selected targets and strike them with pinpoint precision. They quickly proved more effective than AH-1s and were some of the first to receive the yellow V marking applied over the rear fuselage (in FS33538 Insignia Yellow) on 8 June 1982. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



Through early 1982, the IDF/AF continued to provoke combat with SyAAF interceptors over Lebanon where it was primarily F-16 units that saw action. After two pilots from No. 117 Squadron claimed a pair of MiG-23s as shot down on 21 April, Amos Mohar from No. 110 Squadron claimed two MiG-21s on 25 May while flying the jet shown here. Israeli F-16A/Bs of this period still wore the original camouflage pattern in sand (FS33531), light green grey (FS34424), and brown (FS30219) on upper surfaces and sides, and grey (FS36375) on undersurfaces. As of 1982, No. 110 Squadron applied its serials near the base of the fin. The typical armament configuration comprised the internal M61A1 Vulcan 20mm gun and four AIM-9Ls. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



As of 1977–1978, Israel's huge fleet of A-4 Skyhawks included over 200 aircraft operated by eight squadrons. By 1982, two units had reequipped with F-16s and Kfirs, but the A-4 still formed the backbone of the IDF/AF and flew most of the air strikes over Lebanon during that year. The mass of Skyhawks had been upgraded to the A-4H and A-4N variants by this time, and these retained camouflage patterns in sand (FS33531), brown (FS30219) and green (FS34258) on upper surfaces and sides, with light blue (FS35622) on undersurfaces, as shown here. This is a reconstruction of the A-4N from No. 115 Squadron shot down over the Beaufort area on the morning of 6 June 1982: its pilot, Aharon Achiaz, ejected safely but was taken prisoner by the PLO. It is shown armed with six Mk.82s mounted on a multiple ejector rack under the centreline: usually, these were accompanied by a pair of drop tanks on the inboard underwing pylons. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)


Southern Lebanon
BEIRUT
Zahle
Shtura
IAP
BEIRUT-DAMASCUS
HIGHWAY
Khalde
Alei
Muderej
Ain Dara
Ein Zehalta
Musa
Douha
Naameh
Damour
Dayr Kamr
Bayt ed-Din
Ba'aklin
Barouch
Muktara
LITANI
Jub Jenin
Mediterranean Sea
LEBANON
Mazboud
Yanta
el-Bire
Sidon
Aabra
AWALI
LAKE KAROUN
Jezzine
Masara
Sukmur
Rachaya
Kfar Kuq
SHAMS
Zahrani
Kfar Hune
Dumr e'Beqa'a
Rashia el-Wadi
ZAHRANI
Meidoun
Eishiah
Harat al-Hart
Nabatiyah
Hasbayya
Demachqiye
Tibnit
Marjayoun
JEBEL SHEIKH
MT. HERMON
Arnoun
BEAUFORT CASTLE
LITANI
Khiyam
Shabriha
Tura
Shhur
Tyre
Tayybah
Metulla
Majdal Shams
Marrakah
Yahun
Rashidiyah
Mas'adah
Qiryat Shemona
Tibnin
Houla
Shaqra
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
Mays al-Jabal
Yatar
UNDOF Zone
Bint Jubayl
Aytarun
Ayta ash-Shaab
Ramot Naftali
Zarit
Rosh HaNiqra
Adamit
Shetula
Rmeich
Avivim
GOLAN HEIGHTS
(occupied by Israel)
Nahariyya
Rihaniya
ISRAEL

(Map by Tom Cooper)

7

AWALI LANDINGS

As mentioned earlier, an amphibious landing conducted by the IDF/Sea Corps – the so-called Seaborne Bypass – was a part of every Israeli operational plan for an invasion of Lebanon. Initially, two options were considered, including a landing in the Jounieh area (Operation Citrus), and a landing south of Beirut (Operation Pines). Interestingly, both variants envisaged the deployment of the same amphibious assault ships: INS *Bat Sheva* (90m long), and four smaller vessels. However, the Sea Corps lacked the capability to conduct both operations at once. Within the top ranks of the service, Operation Citrus had been considered a priority for a long time, because – amongst others – in December 1981, Eitan informed them that he favoured this variant, since he concluded that taking Beirut from the north would be easier. That said, there were sceptical opinions both within the Sea Corps and, even more so, within the General Headquarters, where the option of landing an entire paratrooper brigade with armoured elements south of Beirut was favoured for its expected result: an acceleration of the advance on the Lebanese capital. Eventually, Operation Citrus was scratched for political reasons, but Sharon and Eitan got their 'Seaborne Bypass', nevertheless.[1]

AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE TRAINING

Considering the fact that the IDF had very little experience in amphibious warfare, it is unsurprising that the preparations for an amphibious assault into Lebanon were initiated in 1979: the force had to learn how to conduct such operations. By 1981, several large exercises had been conducted, involving the 35th Paratrooper Brigade, minor armoured units, and the 921st Division of the Sea Corps (its 'Landing Craft Flotilla'). Commander of the later, Mike Eldar, then conducted additional exercises through the rest of the same year, and into early 1982, focusing on landing tanks and APCs under different conditions. The most problematic proved the disembarkation of the heavy Merkava MBTs. For learning how to operate these, several 'seamen' form the 921st Division attended unofficial tank driving courses, and then a few Merkavas were 'borrowed' from the Armoured Corps to carry out related testing. Before long, and although cooperation between all the involved branches was highly professional, the testing revealed significant gaps between the expectations of the top commanders involved, the paratroopers, and the Sea Corps' capabilities. From the point of view of both the CO 96th Division, Amos Yaron, and the CO 35th Paratrooper Brigade, Yoram Yair, landing craft were 'little more than seaborne helicopters': they expected them to be capable of landing wherever necessary. Ironically, such a view was supported by Zeev Almog, C-in-C IDF/Sea Corps, who did not want to disappoint his 'guests'. Perhaps the most important was Exercise Nitzan, conducted in December 1981. Including a simulated assault by three landing ships deploying paratroopers, tanks, engineers, and fire support units while escorted by fast missile craft (FAC) and patrol boats, it was concluded to the full satisfaction of everybody involved – down to two exceptions: there was no cooperation with the air force at all, and overall command and control of the IDF/Sea Corps proved insufficient. Primarily, and as so often, realistic training was of high value for it taught the paratroopers to shift their expectations towards understanding the limits of amphibious warfare imposed by hydrography, currents, terrain and similar factors outside their powers.

In January 1982, the General Headquarters abandoned Operation Citrus and refocused on Operation Pines. This in turn imposed the question of the preferable landing site. Fortunately for it, the IDF/ Sea Corps had been inspecting possible landing sites all through 1979, 1980, and 1981: members of Flotilla 13 had been sent to check the seabed and measure the depth at dozens of different points, resulting in a very precise hydrographical map.[2] That said, many of the missions in question were extremely clandestine by their nature, and thus failed to result in measurements that were as precise as desired. For example, commandos had a major problem in describing the size of specific rocks and their location in the Zahrani area, while all the requests to involve some officers from the 921st Division were turned down by higher ranks. Eventually, it was only in April 1982 that two sites in that part of Lebanon were selected: one for lighter, 60-metre-long amphibious ships, and the other for the heavier, 90-metre-long, INS *Bat Sheva*. Even then, both imposed strict limitations due to the proximity to the underwater pipelines of the nearby oil refinery, and numerous boulders on the seabed, resulting in the decision to load the biggest Israeli amphibious assault ship to only 50 percent of her capability.

SELECTION OF SITES AND PROCEDURES

The next issue was that of procedures. The paratroopers wanted to go ashore at two places around Zahrani. Two 60m-long vessels were to deploy light forces that would secure the bridgehead starting from the first site, and then the INS *Bat Sheva* was to bring in the heavy elements to the second. A cross-examination of this part of the operation exposed the fact that not only had the crews to navigate particularly carefully in order to avoid underwater rocks and pipelines – and that all the measurement would have to be

Boats and commandos of Flotilla 13, preparing to reroute towards the Awali landing site on afternoon of 6 June 1982 after the original plan for the landing at Zahrani was abandoned. (Photo by Mike Eldar) undertaken manually, for none of the ships were equipped with necessary technical means – but that if undertaken on a clear night, the landing force would hit the beach 'perfectly' illuminated by the lights of the Zahrani oil refinery. It goes almost without saying that the related testing and training ended having completely exhausted both the men and their equipment yet, ultimately, proved entirely pointless.

It was around the same time that the Operational Planning Branch of the Engineering Corps found an alternative landing site at Awali beach, north of Sidon. This had already been checked twice – in December 1981 and February 1982 – and the available information was not only much more complete than that about the beaches in the Zahrani area, but also much more favourable for an amphibious landing. The problem was that the beach was outside the operational zone assigned to the 96th Division and would require a faster advance of the 91st Division to prove sound at the tactical and operational level.

To make things certain, the IDF/Sea Corps carried out two additional inspections: Awali beach had been checked again on 17 April, and the Zahrani site four days later. Once again, the results were clear: Awali proved almost perfect for a 'dry' landing. At that point in time nobody less than Almog refused to forward the resulting conclusions to the 96th Division: he was concerned that the paratroopers might be destroyed by another whim. Ironically, while he was eventually convinced to do so, and his message was conveyed to the paratroopers by the Chief of Operations Sea Corps, Eli Rahav, the final version of the order for Operation Peace for Galilee, issued on 5 June 1982, included the order for a landing in the Zahrani area – as demanded by Sharon at the last minute.

A FLEET IN TATTERS

Meanwhile, the condition of the available amphibious assault vessels was alarming. Back in November 1980, the IDF Operational Requirement demanded that the Sea Corps must be capable of lifting and deploying a full brigade combat team with 36 MBTs, 36 APCs, 18 self-propelled artillery pieces, 11 engineering vehicles, and additional combat support and supply vehicles (altogether around 130 vehicles) in one run. In reality, as of April–May 1982 the ships of the 921st Division – INS *Bat Sheva*, INS *Ashdod*, INS *Ashkelon*, and INS *Achziv* – could barely lift some 40 vehicles in one round. All the vessels were in very poor condition and none could take its full projected load. For example, INS *Bat Sheva* lost its outboard pusher engine: a replacement was ordered from Germany but arrived only a few days before the actual operation, and then was stuck in customs. INS *Ashkelon* was grounded due to leaks in her tanks, and eventually cannibalised for spares, and thus non-operational, while her sister-ships, INS *Ashdod* and INS *Achziv* developed numerous leaks and would be more of a danger for their crew and passengers than for the enemy if put to sea while fully loaded. Furthermore, all together had several additional characteristics in common: they lacked even the most basic navigation equipment, night vision equipment, modern internal communications, effective ventilation, and operational sealing doors. The reason for such poor condition of all the ships was that the tempo of their exercises was so high, that none had received a major overhaul since pressed into service in 1967–1971: they had been worn out by constant operations (including efforts to keep the Phalange resupplied).[3]

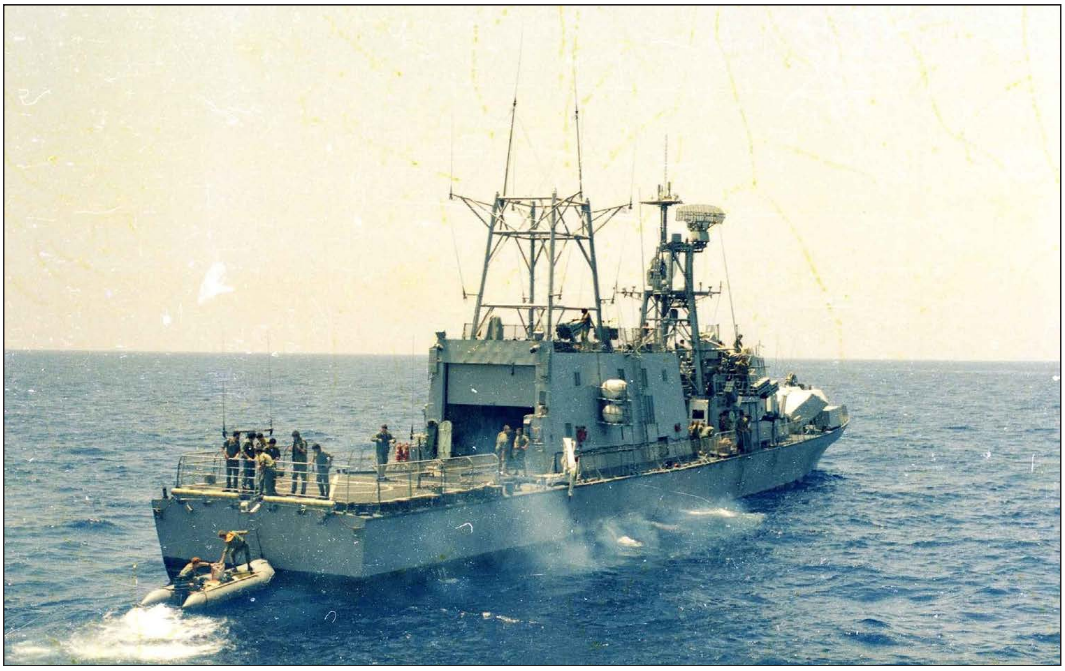
Whatever the condition of the available amphibious assault ships, on 5 June 1982 the General Headquarters IDF issued the order for the execution of the assault, and the same evening the final brief was conducted for all the involved commanders of the force composed as detailed in Table 1.

FINAL PREPARATIONS

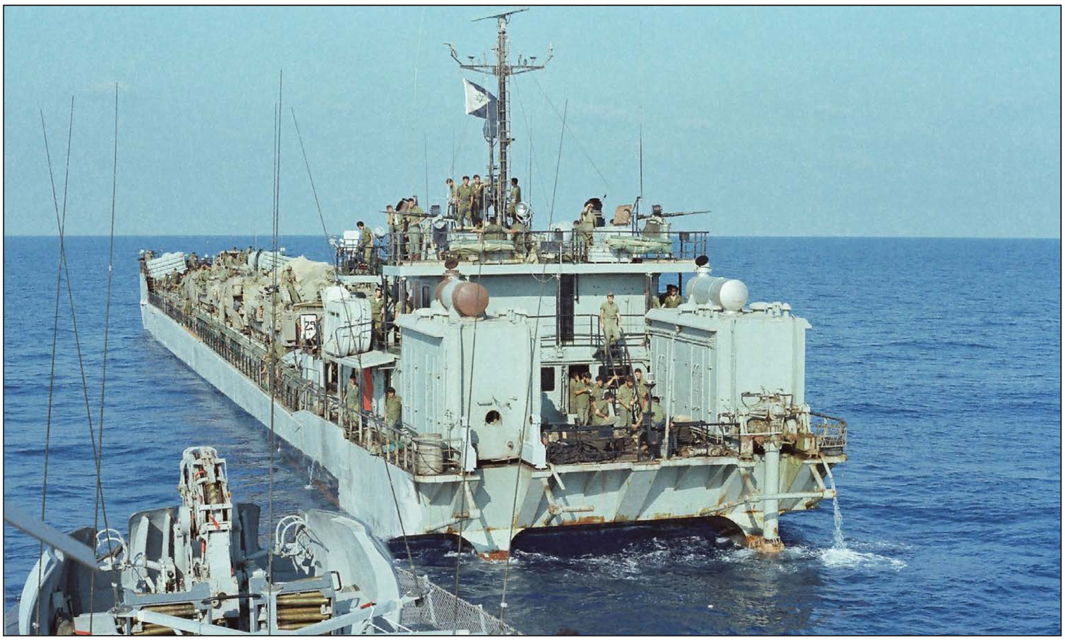
The IDF/Sea Corps assigned INS *Geula* – a Saar 4.5-class missile corvette – as the command and control ship for this operation: Almog

Table 1: Order of Battle for the Awali Landing, 7 June 1982

Unit	Element	Notes
Mission Commander: Colonel Avraham 'Musli' Ashur (CO Ashdod Base)		
921st Division		**amphibious assault ships; CO Mike Eldar**
	INS *Bat Sheva* (P-57)	CO Dani Carmeli
	INS *Ashdod* (P-61)	CO Rafi Benyamin
	INS *Achziv* (P-65)	Udi Yehoshua
Flotilla 3		12 missile boats; CO Arye Rona
	INS *Geula*	flagship; Gal Amit
	4 vessels	close fire support
	2 vessels	long-range fire support
	2 vessels	blocking positions (near Beirut)
	3 vessels	anti-submarine patrol
Coastal Security Flotilla		about 30 Dabur-class patrol boats
	914th Division	CO Avi Shahav
	916th Division	CO Haim Lahav
Flotilla 7		submarines, CO Shaul Horev
	INS *Rahav*	CO Haim Kopert
	INS *Gal*	CO Giora Saar
Flotilla 13		naval commandos; CO Uzi Livnat
	bridgehead force	CO Yadidya Yaari
	boat force	embarked on Snunit, Zaharon, Zodiac; CO Israel Assaf
	landing site security	CO Amnon Sofer
	Unit 707	divers; CO Giora Nadiv
Support Vessels	INS *Bat Galim*	RO-RO-ship; CO Ilan Bochris
	MS *Jasmin*	RO-RO-ship; CO Ehud Ariel
	INS *Maoz*	special support ship; CO Zeev Yanovsky
	INS *Hanit*	tugboat; Micha Zend



INS *Geula*, a Saar 4.5-class missile corvette, adapted for needs of the 96th Division: notable is the extra mast installed atop of the helicopter hangar, carrying extra communication equipment. (Clandestine Immigration and Naval Museum in Haifa)



INS *Bat Sheva* (hull-number P-57), the biggest amphibious assault ship of the IDF/Sea Corps as of 1982, seen on the way to the Awali landings on 6 June 1982. (Photo by Yossi Ben Hanan)

confirmed that decision although both the CO 96th Division, Amos Yaron, and the Landing Mission Commander, 'Musli Ashur', requested INS *Maoz* to act as such. This decision had its advantages and disadvantages: the corvette was overcrowded by the presence of generals Yaron, Yossi Ben Hanan and Eli Rahav, and colonels Yoram Yair, Musli Ashur, Arye Rona, and other members of the staff, making the lift of her crew hard. In a worst-case scenario, the entire command of the operation could have been taken out by a single blow. However, INS *Geula* had been modified to include all the necessary communication gear through the installation of an extra mast with antennas atop of the helicopter hangar. Foremost, all the commands were in one spot and thus expected to cooperate in a more productive fashion.

The amphibious assault ships involved were loaded separately. INS *Bat Sheva* at Nitsanim beach between Ashkelon and Ashdod, INS *Ashdov* and INS *Achziv* in the port of Ashdod. *Bat Sheva* could be loaded only to about 50 percent capacity and thus took 300 paratroopers and 14 M113s of the 890th Battalion, four Magach-6 MBTs of the 795th Battalion, two M109s of the 402nd Battalion, and the engineers. Its loading was over shortly before midnight of 5–6 June. The loading in Ashdod was not as smooth: the two ships took on five MBTs, 16 APCs, and a D7 dozer, but the arrival of paratroopers from the 35th Brigade was delayed, and the loading finalised only by dawn of 6 June. In total, the landing party included 800 troops and 44 vehicles. To the relief of almost everybody involved, around 1500hrs Sharon decided to cancel the landing at Zahrani, and switch to Awali only: the landing force was informed about this around two hours later, starting hurried preparations. The men of the 921st Division were happy, but everybody else – naval commandos, the fire support element, and the 35th Paratrooper Brigade – had to rework their plans, while missile boats and INS *Rahav* (the attack submarine that guided their fire), had to relocate towards Awali. That said, the preparatory shelling was carried out in effective fashion, and several Palestinian artillery pieces were detected and knocked out by 76mm gunfire.

The first commando party headed for the bridgehead at 2145hrs, landed undisturbed and set up blocking positions. It was followed by the Engineering Company of the 35th Brigade (CO Yehiel Gozal), and the Squadron Leaders Company of the 50th Battalion, who quickly checked the landing site. Around 2200hrs the commandos reported ambushing two vehicles and neutralising seven Palestinian militants, but the landing went on and another 200 commandos and paratroopers reached the beach, further expanding the bridgehead. By 2330hrs, the bridge at Awali was secured and the main landing began with INS *Bat Sheva* approaching the coast to land first. The bow door was opened at 2355hrs and all the troops and vehicles were on the beach by 0020hrs of 7 June. The other two vessels followed in fashion, quickly disgorging their loads – even if not without a glitch. One Magach tank aboard INS *Ashdod* refused to start: the simplest solution was

Loading of the tanks of the 795th Battalion, 844th armoured Brigade, in Naharia. (IDF)

to bring back another tank to tow it to the shore, and then work on solving the issue.

The landing was completed by 0109hrs and the IDF/Sea Corps taskforce then safely left the site, to return to Israel. The entire operation was thus concluded within less than 1.5 hours, and without any kind of major issues: the troops encountered only sporadic artillery and rocket fire, mostly concentrated on nearby sites selected for helicopter landings. One of these received a direct hit by a 122mm rocket just moments after a helicopter landed a group of operators of Unit 5101 (colloquially 'Shaldag') – a special forces unit reporting to 35th Paratrooper Brigade with similar training and tasks as the British Special Air Service. To the immense luck of the Israelis, there were no casualties.

PALESTINIAN REACTION

The Awali landing encountered only minimal Palestinian opposition. Certainly enough, the PLO was informed about the Israeli planning and knew there would be a landing – either north or south of Beirut. This information was leaked by Phalangist officers, several times, and Arafat ordered his commanders to reinforce the defences of the Zahrani oil refinery, and the stretch of the coast between Damour and Khalde. However, by the time of the landing, no Palestinian combatants in the Awali area were on alert: for all practical purpose, the amphibious assault on that site took *both* sides by surprise.

The nearest Palestinian unit was a company-sized asset of the PLA equipped with five T-34/85 tanks, deployed in the village of Aalman, some 400m north-east from the bridge at Awali. Sidon was the HQ of the Castel Brigade of Fatah, reinforced by a company each of T-34/85s and 120mm mortars. The HQ in Beirut was informed about the Israeli arrival by around 2200hrs, when the Israeli commandos gunned down two vehicles. However, the command did not react: it did not order tanks from Aalman out of their position, nor did it put the Castel Brigade on alert: this happened only hours later. Once out of Sidon, the Castel Brigade did dispatch a few tanks, but their attack on the blocking position of the 202nd Battalion in the Bqousta area was quickly repelled, with the loss of half of the involved T-34/85s.

The briefing of commanders of the 96th Division at Northern Command on 6 June 1982. From left to right: Amir Drori (CO Northern Command), Doron Avrutsky (CO 35th Brigade Special Units Battalion), Yossi Morag (CO 795th Battalion), and Amos Yaron (CO 96th Division). (Photo by Yossi Ben Hanan)

On the contrary, by the morning of 7 June, both the CO of the Castel Brigade and Martyrs of September Battalion escaped to the Beka'a Valley, leaving their leaderless men behind. This was quite ironic considering the fact that a single hit on any of Israel's worn-out amphibious assault ships could have easily spoiled the entire operation: the IDF/Sea Corps simply had no replacements for them.

During the night the landing party began fanning out of the bridgehead. Giant Sikorsky S.65 helicopters deployed additional paratroopers of the 35th Brigade on hilltops overlooking the beachhead, and A Company of the 50th Battalion (CO Moshe Bachar) then quickly secured the Notre Dame College, encountering no opposition. As mentioned above, a team of Unit 5101 commanded by Giora Inbar landed in the Bqousta area. The next planned to arrive was a part of the 7038th Battalion (CO Haki Porat) equipped with 120mm mortars, but their landing was recalled due to the heavy shelling of the landing zone. Instead, the second part of the battalion (led by its Deputy Commander, Hillel Eherman) landed safely shortly after, and provided welcome fire support for the paratroopers.

As soon as the beachhead had been secured, Yair ordered two companies of the 890th Paratrooper Battalion – supported by tanks of the 795th Battalion – to secure the bridge over the Litani, while another platoon of tanks supported the 202nd Battalion in securing the high ground of Bqousta.

FIRE SUPPORT

One of the biggest challenges of the Awali landing was the provision of fire support, indeed the 'isolation' of the landing site from Palestinian forces in the area. As described above, the fire support element included missile boats, two M109s of 411th Battalion, and airborne artillery of the 7038th Battalion from the 96th Division. The entire effort was under the control of the Divisional Fire

Support Officer, Shimon Rom, and the CO 9593rd Artillery Brigade, Amnon Ben-Yair, both of whom were aboard INS *Geula*. They were supported by two additional officers of the 9593rd Brigade: Yoav David, embarked on one of the missile boats, and Elhanan Zota, underway on the submarine INS *Rahav*.

Although it turned out that the range of his radio set was barely sufficient, Ben-Yair managed to call up artillery fire from 175mm howitzers of the 55th Artillery Battalion (CO Yair Ziner), deployed in the Marjayoun area, and these provided effective support directed by an ELTA Shilam artillery radar, deployed in action for the first time ever.

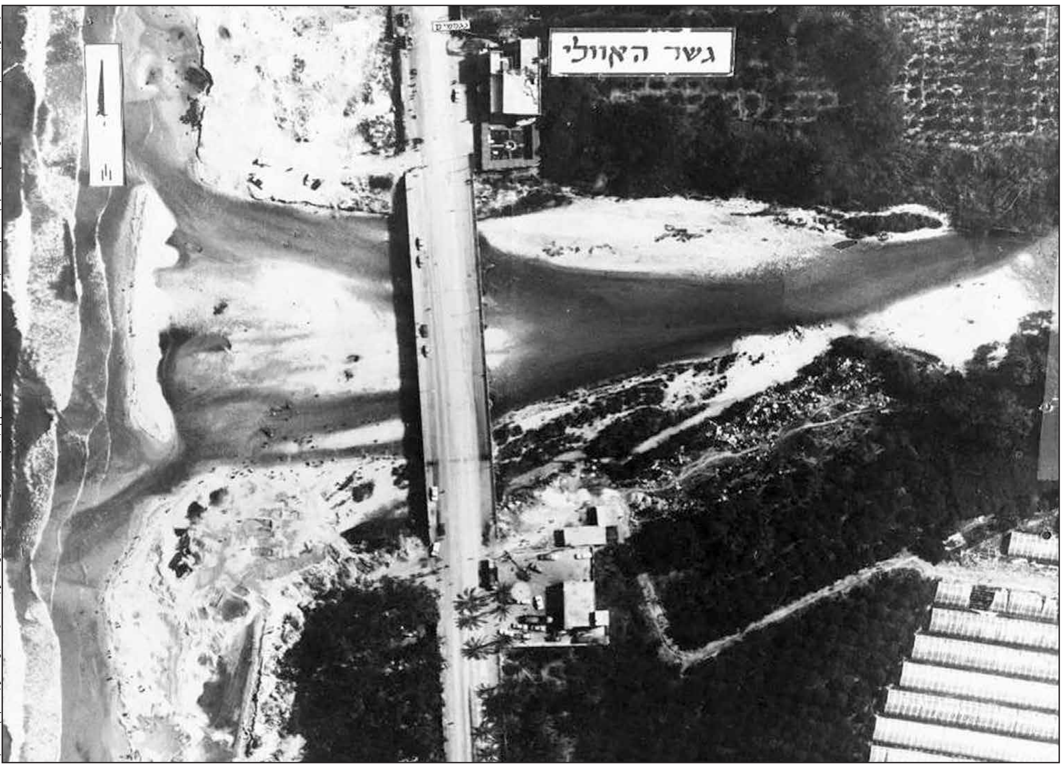
In addition to the warships, and on the initiative of the CO 35th Paratrooper Brigade, Yoram Yair – who possessed rich experience in earlier operations in Lebanon (see Volume 2 for details) – the taskforce that landed at Awali had a strong integral artillery element. Commanded by Eitan Dangot, it included not only two M109A2s, a M577A1 command APC, and a M548 ammunition carrier but, during the third landing circle, was reinforced through the arrival of six M107 self-propelled 175mm howitzers of the 412th Battalion. Yair's argument was that the force had to pack heavy firepower in the event that it was isolated from the ground advance and encountered Syrian Army troops.

SECOND AND THIRD WAVE

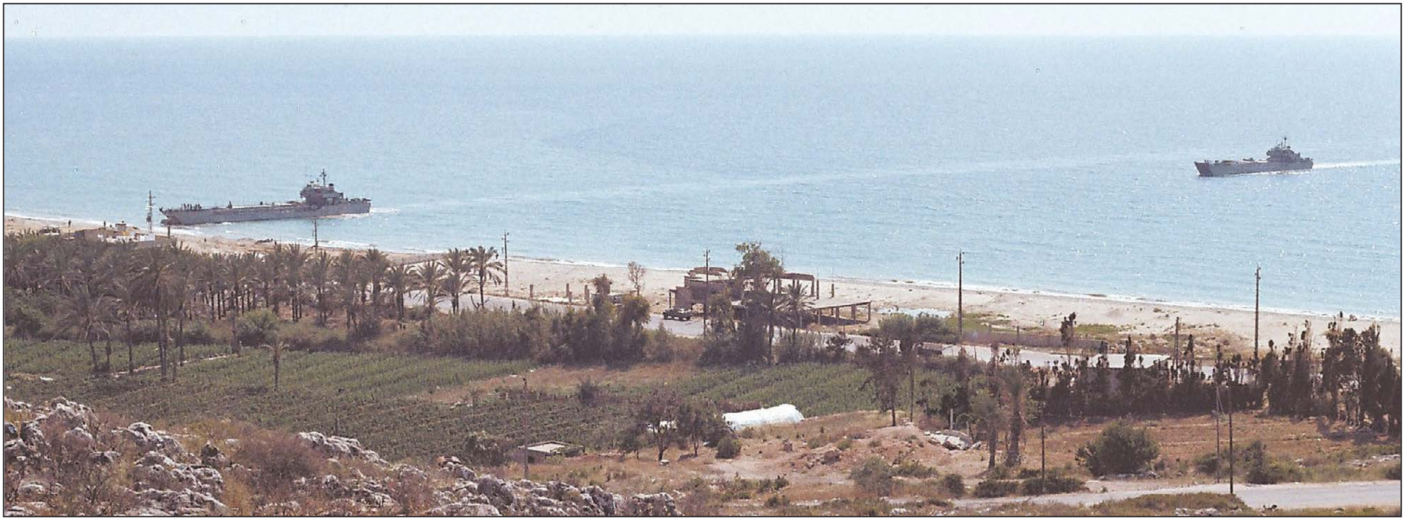
The loading of the second wave was initiated in the port of Nahariya on the morning of 7 June. This time, the three vessels took one Magach and nine Sho'ts of the 795th Battalion (this 'company' was commanded by the Battalion Deputy Commander, Tzvika Yakobson), and 39 APCs of the 35th Brigade. By then, the beachhead was under constant Palestinian artillery fire, which the fire support proved unable to suppress. Moreover, INS *Rahav* was rerouted to the Damour area, and there was nobody around to coordinate naval gunfire. With Yaron vocally demanding that the IDF/Sea Corps land the second wave as soon as possible, Almog put all the responsibility into the hands of the mission commander, Avraham Ashur, and issued a highly controversial order: 'land if unopposed only'.

With nobody on board the amphibious assault ships understanding this order, they went in. At 1420hrs, INS *Ashdod* and INS *Achziv* hit the beach only dozens of metres away from each other and started to unload. The crew of INS *Bat Sheva* completed its part of the job by 1530hrs. By then, eight F-16As from No. 110 Squadron dropped at least 16 smoke bombs around the hilltops and thus, despite pretty dense artillery fire of the PLO and the PLA, no hits were scored and there were no casualties.[4]

The air force did prove more useful in providing helicopters that flew in additional troops, though. The first of these were 87 soldiers of Unit 5173 (a Paratrooper Reconnaissance Company, commanded



An aerial reconnaissance photograph of the Awali river bridge: this was secured by the 35th Brigade during the night from 6 to 7 June 1982. (IDF)



A 'pastoral' view of the second wave of amphibious landings of 7 June 1982. Clearly visible is the difference in size between the 90-metre-long INS *Bat Sheva* (P-57, left side) and the 60-metre-long craft approaching from the right side. (Photo by Yossi Ben Hanan)

ISRAEL'S FLYING ARTILLERY[5]

The story of the 7038th Heavy Mortar Battalion can be traced back to early 1956, when the IDF disbanded the Givati Brigade and transferred all the fire support units to the Paratrooper brigade. Following appropriate training, a new unit came into being: the 332nd Battalion, equipped with 120mm mortars. This took part in the Suez War of 1956, fighting as an integral part of the 202nd Paratrooper Brigade.

By 1967, there were two fire support paratrooper battalions:

- 332nd Battalion assigned to the 35th Brigade, and
- 425th Battalion assigned to the 80th Brigade.

Only the newly established 55th Paratrooper Brigade did not possess units of this kind: this came into being after the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War in the form of the 343rd Battalion. All three units saw much action during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. In 1976, the 343rd Battalion (CO Dudu Harmat) test-operated captured D-30 122mm towed howitzers, adapted to be carried by Sikorsky S.65 helicopters. This resulted in a decision to adopt these Soviet-made weapons, towed by Command Car trucks when moved on the ground.

In 1977, the IDF decided to integrate all its airborne units under the Command of Chief Paratrooper Officer; in turn, this resulted in a reorganisation of all fire support units into a Paratrooper Artillery Brigade, subordinated to the Joint Divisional structure, and assignment of a fire support officer to each of the paratrooper brigades. Commanded by Yaakov Tsur, the Paratrooper Artillery Brigade came into being through the separation of the fire support elements from their 'mother' brigades but proved a more problematic issue than expected and ended in the neglect of all units. The situation was saved by the Artillery Corps, which offered 'shelter' for the 332nd and 343rd Battalion, while the 425th Battalion was disbanded. The two surviving units were able to make use of Artillery Corps bases and training facilities, had artillery officers assigned to them, and were deployed with good results during Operation Stone of Wisdom in 1978.

By 1979, a new unit came into being, the 9693rd Paratrooper Artillery Brigade. This included the 7038th Battalion equipped with 120mm mortars, and the 7041st Battalion with D-30 howitzers, all of which were adapted for deployment by transport aircraft and helicopters. The 9693rd Brigade was 'returned' to the Paratrooper Corps in 1981, but D-30s were replaced by modified Soltam M71 155mm howitzers, towed by modified M548 ammunition carriers. By 1982, the 9693rd Paratrooper Artillery Brigade was commanded by Shiom Rom: the 7038th Paratrooper Artillery Battalion by Haki Porat, and the 7041st Paratrooper Artillery Battalion by Asher Diamant.

120mm mortars of the 7038th Battalion, during a fire support action for the 35th Brigade. (IDF) by Israel Ziv), who arrived together with a mortar squad and an antitank squad armed with BGM-47 Dragon ATGMs. Originally, this unit has been supposed to act as an independent reserve element of Northern Command, but reason prevailed.

Eventually, after the third amphibious landing, the 35th Brigade was at full strength and Yair then organised it into two task forces: while the 202nd Battalion was tasked with establishing blocking positions in the Bqousta area, the rest of the brigade advanced on the Damour River. While its forward elements got as far as Saadiyat, the mass of the brigade and the 795th Battalion ended the day in the Nabi Younes area.

8

BATTLE FOR A SYMBOL

The first mission assigned to Avigdor Kahalani's 36th Division was securing the area between Arnoun and Nabatiyeh. This included Beaufort Castle: a Crusader fortress constructed in the twelfth century atop a 300-metre-high cliff, and overlooking all of Lebanon up and down the Litani River – and much of northern Israel. A choke point for Major Haddad's forces in southern Lebanon, Beaufort was held by an infantry company from Fatah. Despite the widespread belief and several wild exaggerations, it did not pose much threat to upper Galilee – because the garrison possessed no heavy weapons.[1]

PLAN OF ACTION

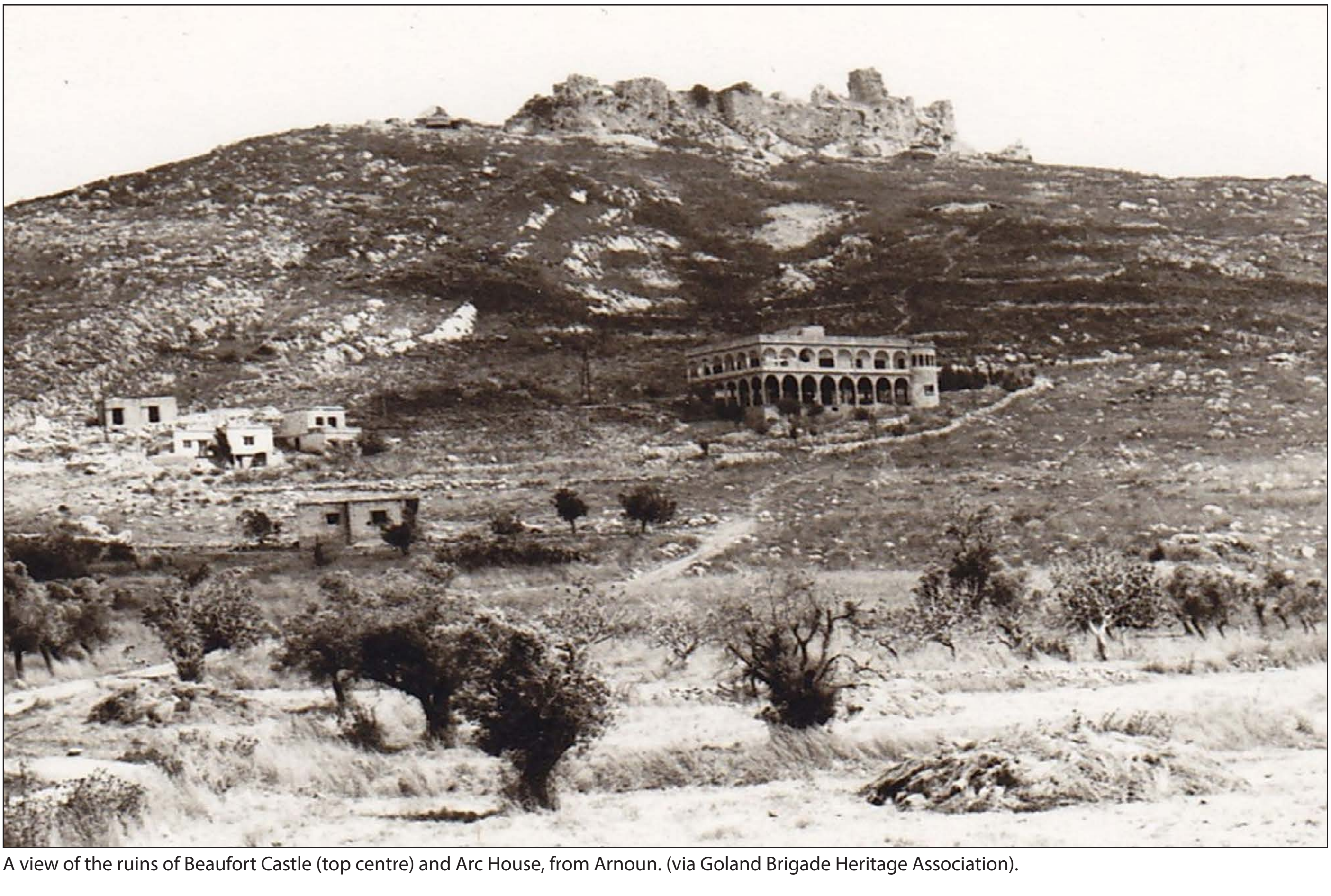
The original importance of securing Beaufort was the potential of the local garrison to threaten the movement over the bridge at Khardal. Once Operation Peace for Galilee was initiated, the decision was taken to cross the Litani River over the bridge at Aqiya, further south, and thus bypass the Nabatiyah – Arnoun area well to the west. However, orders to secure Beaufort were not changed and thus the mission was initiated as planned months before.

During the morning of 6 June, the entire area received much attention from the IDF/AF and artillery. A-4 Skyhawks of No. 115 and No. 140 Squadrons flew one strike each early in the morning, followed by another at 0740: during this second mission, No. 115 lost the A-4N flown by Captain (Reserve) Aharon Achiaz to several Soviet-made 9K32 Strela (ASCC/NATO codename 'SA-7 Grail') man-portable air defence system (MANPADs), fired from an antiaircraft defence training camp in the Beaufort area. Achiaz ejected safely but was taken prisoner.[2]

Of course, the action on the ground carried on unrelentingly. The task force assigned the mission of capturing Beaufort was commanded by the Deputy Commander of the 1st 'Golani' Infantry Brigade, Gabi Ashkenazi, organised into two parties:

- 1st Party (CO Yaakov Amar), including the 51st Battalion (Golani Brigade), and a company of Sho't MBTs from 71st Battalion (188th Armoured Brigade): this had the task of securing two Palestinian strongholds north of Beaufort.
- 2nd Party (CO Moshe Kaplinsky, Deputy CO Zvika Barkai), including a combined force of 1st Brigade's reconnaissance and engineering units, and a tank platoon of 53rd Battalion (188th Armoured Brigade); this had the task of securing Beaufort Castle.[3]

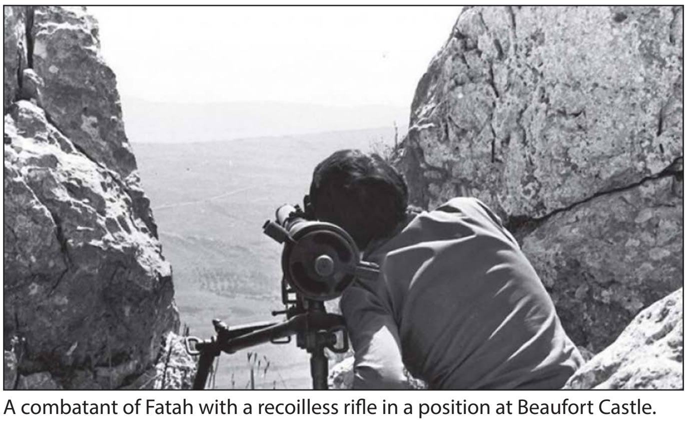
Initially, both parties travelled together, mounted on 22 M113 APCs, and followed by their support elements. Kaplinsky and Barkai planned to attack from two directions. From the south, Zvika Barkai and his two teams of engineers, augmented by a reconnaissance team (CO Erez Gershtein) were to secure the 'Antenna Farm' bunker, about 200m south of the castle. From the north, Mati Goldman and



A view of the ruins of Beaufort Castle (top centre) and Arc House, from Arnoun. (via Goland Brigade Heritage Association).

The tailfin of the A-4N Skyhawk of No. 115 Squadron shot down by an SA-7 MANPAD, reportedly fired from the Beaufort area, on 6 June 1982. Pilot, Captain Aharon Achiaz, ejected safely but was taken prisoner. (Efim Sandler collection)

Aharon Achiaz returned home in a prisoner exchange on 20 August 1982. (IPPA/National Library of Israel)



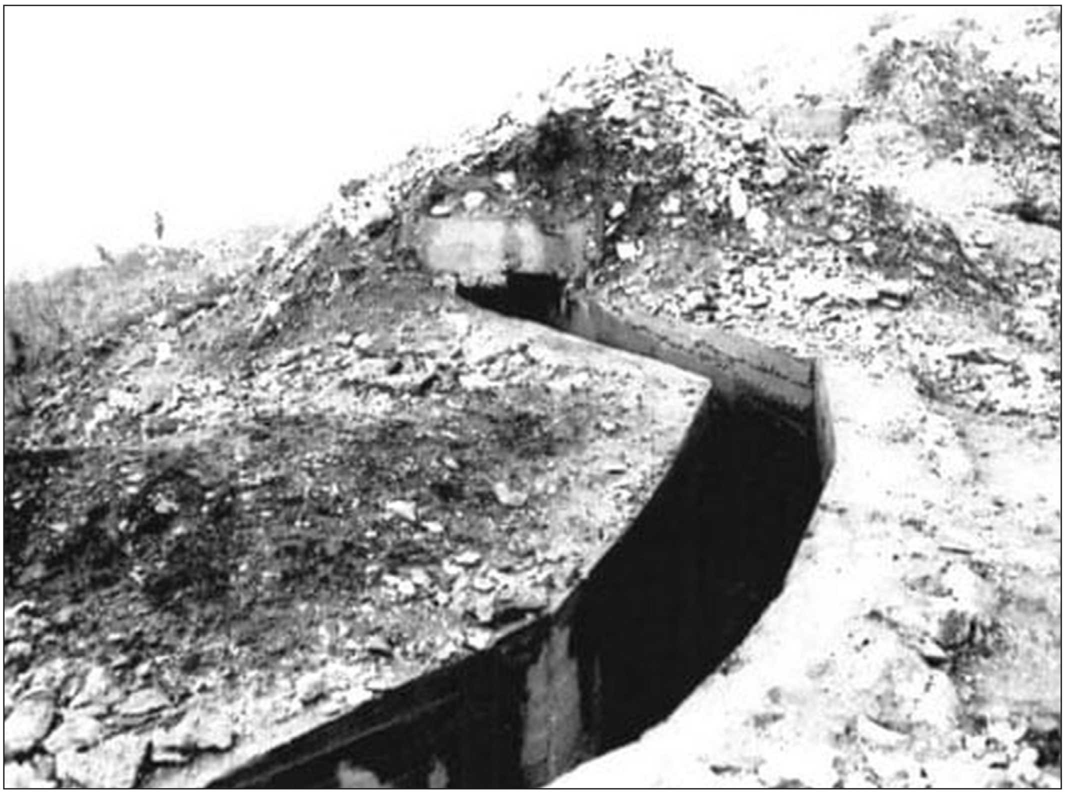
A combatant of Fatah with a recoilless rifle in a position at Beaufort Castle. According to Israeli military intelligence, the Palestinian garrison had at least two such weapons and two ZU-23-2 23mm antiaircraft guns. (via Efim Sandler)

Avikam Reshef led two teams tasked with clearing the trenches and bunkers, after which one team was to hold the position and the other to serve as a backup at Arc House. Fire support was to be provided by tanks and APCs.

GOLDMAN'S ASSAULT

The original plan expected both attacks to be initiated during daylight at 1500hrs. However, Ashkenazi's troops were stuck in a traffic snarl-up on the bridge at Aqiya and thus badly behind schedule. Kaplinsky requested permission to cross the Litani over the water, and thus bypass the jam: permission was granted, and the force reached Arnoun around 1800hrs only to receive fire from various directions. One APC was hit and Kaplinsky shot in the back and rendered unconscious – but not before being able to warn Ashkenazi that he could not proceed. The latter then appointed Guni Hernik to command. While Guni was rushing to his M113, the APC received an RPG hit and was flipped on its side: lightly wounded, Hernik proceeded on foot. After reaching the starting point at Arc House on the southern end of Arnoun village, he informed everybody on the radio that he was taking over and using his old callsign. While discussing the original plan with Barkai, the two concluded to make changes to it: poor roads made an APC-mounted attack impossible, and thus the troops were to proceed on foot to their objective. The men debussed and organised before moving on.

Around 2000hrs, the forces began to approach their objectives. As expected, all the APCs and tanks rapidly fell back: several having developed problems with tracks, and they would not take part in the battle. Led by Moti Goldman, the northern force – comprising 21 troops – was crossing the road to the castle when it was engaged by a heavy machine gun and two ZU-23 antiaircraft auto-cannons that dominated their route. The head of the column managed to cross safely, but the tail suffered casualties, including two killed and three wounded. Leaving behind several troops to attend the casualties, Goldman's troops advanced, supported by covering fire from RPGs, machine guns, and grenade launchers. The Palestinians fought back fiercely and both sides made extensive use of hand grenades. However, the defenders had it easier due to advantage in elevation: their bombs killed one soldier and wounded another three. By the time he was within striking distance, Goldman was left with only six troops able to continue but, encouraged by Hernik, he pressed on. On reaching the first trench, Goldman jumped in – only to find it was too narrow for him to move. Having no other choice, he climbed out, leaving the position to three of his men small enough to make use of the trench, while covering them with gunfire and grenades. Nevertheless, the trench then received a direct RPG hit, which badly wounded two: despite attempts of the third to take care of their injuries, both soldiers died. Meanwhile, Goldman and another soldier managed to silence the defences with several rifle grenades but was down to just himself and two other troops capable of continuing the fight. At this point, Hernik joined him with two aides, and they began combing the trenches. In the darkness, they missed a sealed concrete position at first. This was discovered only minutes later, after both officers found its opening. All attempts to



The narrow trenches of the Palestinian defences of Beaufort Castle: loaded with their cargo-carrying vests, IDF troops could barely move inside them, and had to mop up while moving along their tops, fully exposed to fire from all directions. (Photo by Danny Levin)

throw hand grenades through the opening failed, as did all the calls shouted in Arabic for the occupants to surrender: on the contrary, a well-aimed burst of fire gunned down Hernik.

BARKAI'S ATTACK

While approaching the Objective Dimona (the antenna), Barkia's force split into two teams – one of engineers, and one of reconnaissance troops. However, Palestinian guards were vigilant and the movement was detected, resulting in both groups receiving heavy fire from a combination of ZU-23s, machine guns, and small arms. Barkai led the assault, reaching the roof of the first bunker, from where he ordered one team to clear the nearby trenches and the other to take cover. Miraculously, these two groups suffered only one casualty: their doctor was wounded in the arm.

Meanwhile, Gershtein's team poured heavy fire from machine guns and RPGs into the Palestinian positions, before rushing towards its objective (callsign Nikba) on the south-eastern side. Underway there, they passed through an incomplete minefield, where mines had been placed on the ground, but not buried. From Nibka, Gershtein led his men to clear the trenches, occasionally provoking short, but bitter firefights at close quarters. He was wounded in the arm in the process, and called Barkai, who arrived alone to assist five men of Gershtein's team to clear the objective. Together, they suppressed the remaining resistance by a combined fire of RPGs, M72 light antitank weapons (LAWs), and rifle grenades, and then proceeded to mop up the rest of the positions. At that point in time, Barkai received a report that

Tanks and APCs of A ('Alon') Company, 53rd Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade, seen while taking positions near the Aquiya bridge, while providing cover for the incoming elements of the 36th Division, which approached from Adaisseh, to the east, on 6 June 1982. (Photo by Itzik Popper)

Tanks of G ('Golan') Company, 53rd Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade, moving to take covering positions over the bridge at Aquiya during the crossing by the 71st Battalion on 6 June 1982. (Photo by Jean-Claude Coutausse)

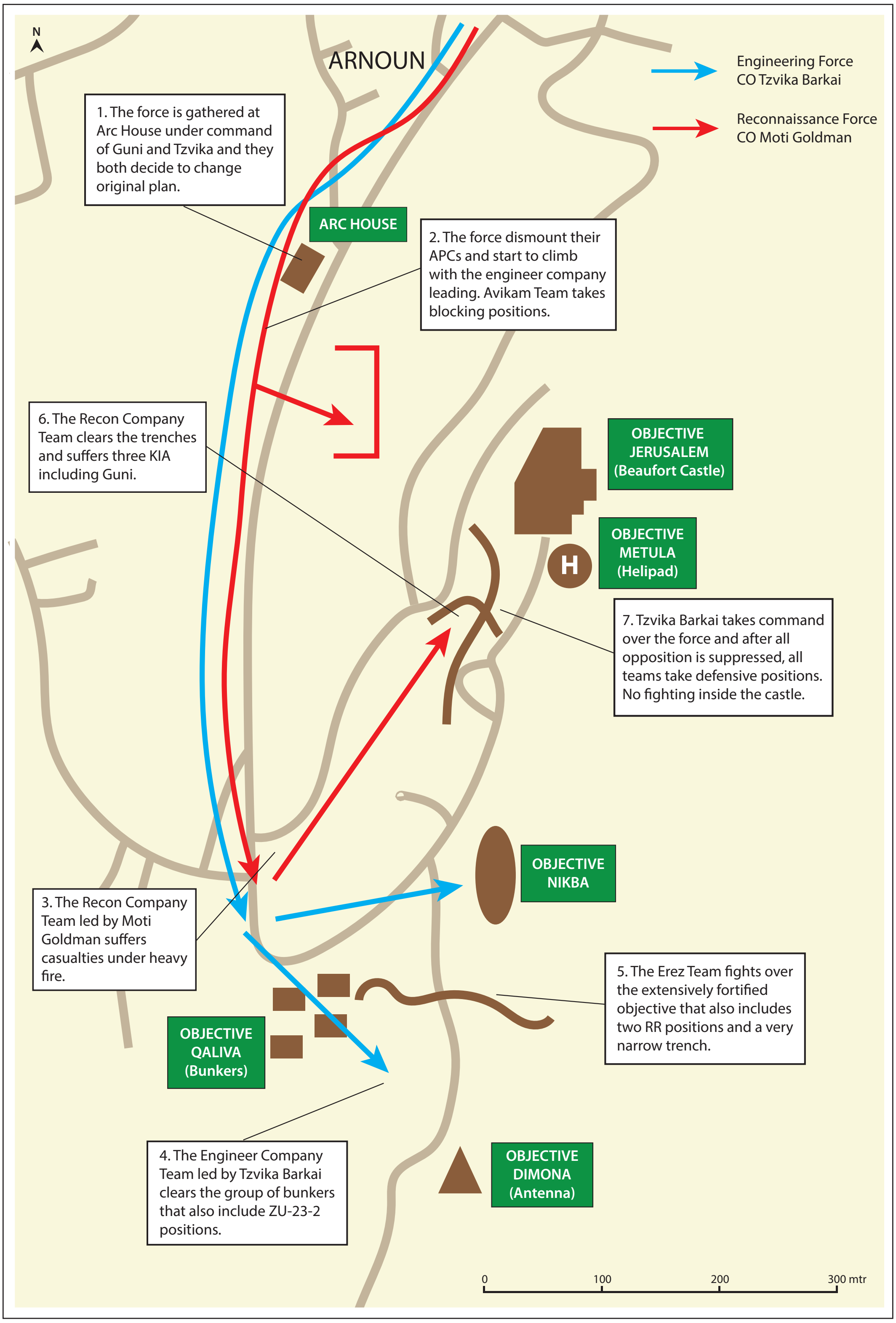
Tanks of the 71st Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade, and APCs of the 12th Battalion, 1st Golani Infantry Brigade, passing the burning Zahrani oil refinery. Note the mine-roller attachment on the Sho't (lower left). (via Efim Sandler)

A view of Beaufort Castle – together with an AH-1 Cobra helicopter of the IDF/AF – from the direction of the Litani River. (via Efim Sandler)

Hernik had been killed, and thus assumed command over the entire mission. Once the southern objective was cleared, he and one of his sappers joined the northern force and brought Gur 42 explosive charges to attack the troublesome concrete position where Hernik had been shot.

Eventually, it turned out that there were no Palestinians inside Beaufort Castle proper. Thus, the battle was over by 2200hrs, by when the castle was under Israeli control, and Barkai ordered all his remaining troops into defensive positions. Medics opened a field station and began taking care of the casualties. When Ashkenazi learned about Hernik's death, he ordered the troops to hold their position and sent his operations officer to take over command. Underway in the darkness, the APC carrying the officer was caught in crossfire and forced to withdraw. Undaunted, the Israelis organised a new relief force, and by morning several M113s and one Sho't MBT of the 53rd Battalion managed to reach the castle. Casualties were evacuated only during the morning, though: despite numerous calls and pleas, pilots of the IDF/AF refused to land, believing there were still enemy troops around. Instead, a medical party from the HQ 1st Brigade reached Beaufort by first light.

Ultimately, the stronghold was cleared by 0730hrs of 7 June 1982. By then, the body count stood at 27 Palestinians killed: the rest managed to evacuate with help of several rope ladders. The Israelis suffered a loss of six killed and 12 wounded: 10 of the latter were evacuated by Bell 212 helicopters. Later during the morning, the survivors of the assault force re-joined Ashkenazi's brigade as it was advancing on Nabatiyah: only a team led by Tamir Massad was left in the castle to secure it for visits by Begin and Sharon.


N
ARNOUN
Engineering Force
CO Tzvika Barkai
Reconnaissance Force
CO Moti Goldman
ARC HOUSE
OBJECTIVE JERUSALEM (Beaufort Castle)
OBJECTIVE METULA (Helipad)
H
OBJECTIVE NIKBA
OBJECTIVE QALIVA (Bunkers)
OBJECTIVE DIMONA (Antenna)
0
100
200
300 mtr

1. The force is gathered at Arc House under command of Guni and Tzvika and they both decide to change original plan.

2. The force dismount their APCs and start to climb with the engineer company leading. Avikam Team takes blocking positions.

3. The Recon Company Team led by Moti Goldman suffers casualties under heavy fire.

4. The Engineer Company Team led by Tzvika Barkai clears the group of bunkers that also include ZU-23-2 positions.

5. The Erez Team fights over the extensively fortified objective that also includes two RR positions and a very narrow trench.

6. The Recon Company Team clears the trenches and suffers three KIA including Guni.

7. Tzvika Barkai takes command over the force and after all opposition is suppressed, all teams take defensive positions. No fighting inside the castle.

The Israeli assault on Beaufort Castle. (Map by George Anderson)

CONTROVERSY

Extremely excited about ‘his’ troops securing Beaufort Castle – which he perceived as the ‘symbol of PLO dominance in southern Lebanon’ – Begin was very pleased about this achievement. He had a short chat with Massad and then gave a longer interview to the press, stressing the fortress was captured without casualties. Apparently, neither Sharon nor Eitan briefed him properly. This caused the first major controversy in Israel of this war, igniting a huge public outburst. Also excited was Major Haddad – who quickly had his troops set the flag of South Lebanon on top of the ruined tower.

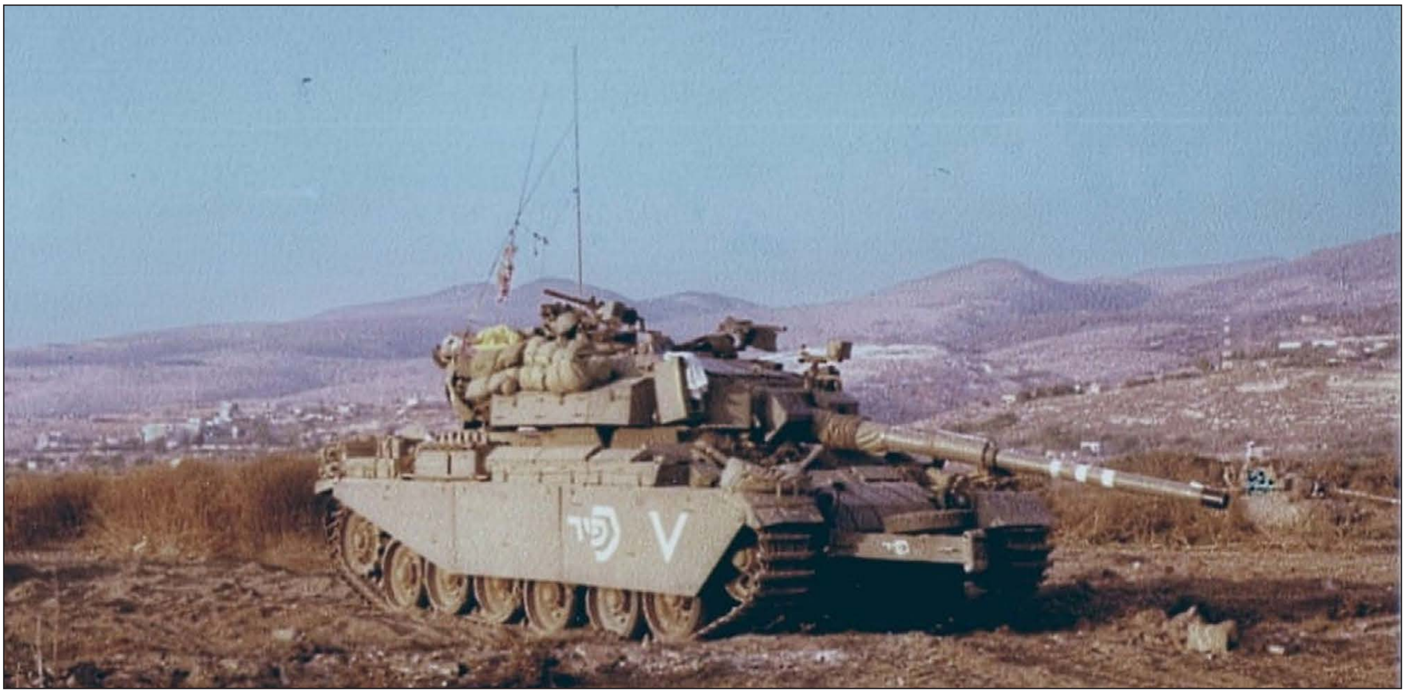
Actually, the assault on Beaufort Castle left two other issues open. The first was the necessity to carry out this attack: as mentioned above, Northern Command had ordered the 36th Division to bypass Beaufort. Therefore, it remains unclear why the order to attack the castle was not withdrawn. The only thing known is that Kahalani and Ashkenazi were only informed about the cancellation of the attack around 2130hrs, as the battle was reaching its peak. Another controversy was related to the deviation from the original plan for the troops to approach their objectives still mounted on APCs during the daytime, and only then to dismount for clearing the trench system while supported by MBTs. The switch from daylight to nocturnal attack was a relatively minor issue, because all troops were extensively trained in night time combat operations: indeed, many insisted that a nocturnal assault was much preferable over a daytime one because darkness offered additional protection to the attacking force.[4]

ASSAULTS ON TIBNIT

During the same night, a combined force of the 51st Battalion and the 1st Infantry Brigade commanded by Major Yaakov Amar assaulted the two Palestinian strongholds east of Tibnit village, atop Hills 548 and 571. As usual, Amar split his forces into two groups:

- CO 51st Battalion with A and G Companies advanced on Hill 571, and
- Deputy CO 51st Battalion with B Company on Hill 548.

While Hill 548 turned out to be empty, Hill 571 hid a classic fortification. The attack received good artillery preparation, but resistance was not fully suppressed. One platoon of G Company hit a minefield, where it lost one killed and one wounded, and remained pinned down for several hours. A Company went on, but ended up in bitter fighting for the trenches. Amar was badly wounded in the head while leading the assault, and his deputy, Shuki Shahror, took over. Eventually, B Company and Sho’t MBTs of K Company, 71st Battalion (188th Armoured Brigade) were rushed to extract G



This Sho't Kal Gimel MBT belonging to the CO of K ('Kfir') Company, 71st Battalion 188th Armoured Brigade was one of the tanks that took part in the recovery of the troubled force of the 51st Battalion, 1st Golani Infantry Brigade, near Arnoun, during the night from 6 to 7 June 1982. (via Kfir Company, 71st/188th)

Members of the reconnaissance and engineering teams of the 1st Golani Infantry Brigade seen combing the defences of Beaufort Castle: this was the first photograph of this crucial position in the hands of the Israeli forces. (Photo by Danny Levin)

Company and its casualties. Amar's task force secured its objectives, but it was neither an easy nor a cheap win: it lost two men killed and several wounded, including the battalion CO and two company commanders.

9

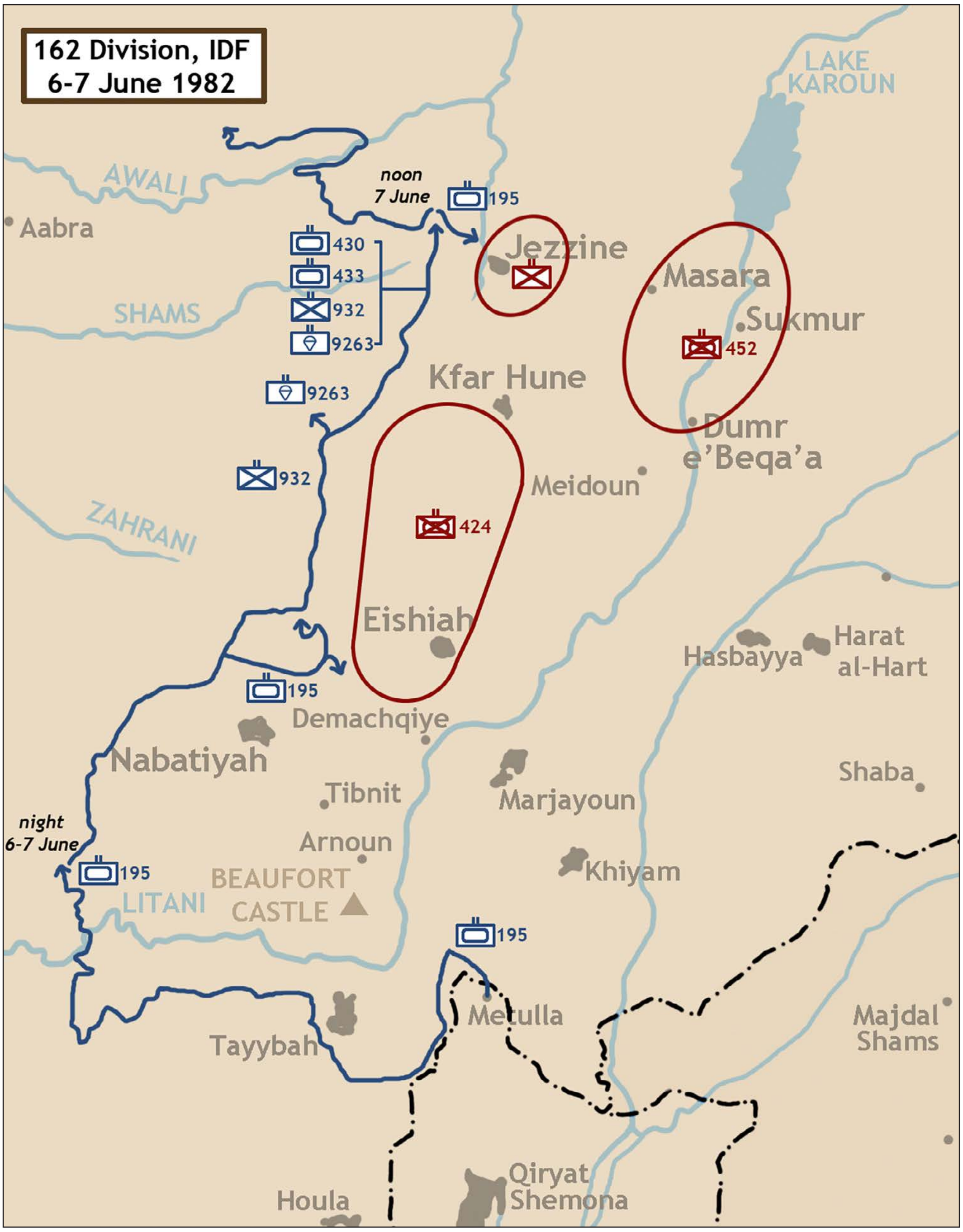
7 JUNE: SIDON, TYRE AND IRON TRIANGLE

Falling ever further behind the schedule, on 7 June 1982, Northern Command of the IDF moved its units to block Sidon, secure Tyre, and then destroy whatever Palestinian militants it could find within the so-called 'Iron Triangle'. Organised in an ad hoc manner, the first effort proved beyond their reach. The second, securing Tyre, was carried out in the form of a much better prepared operation and with surprisingly positive results. The third proved the most complex of all though.[1]

That said, during 7 June, Israeli units reached points on the Lebanese coast up to 70 kilometres from their own border, and within 15 kilometres of the border with Syria. In amongst all of this, intelligence continued reporting the deployment of the 1st Division of the Syrian Arab Army from the border between Lebanon and Syria, the move of its 91st Armoured Brigade into the area between Qaroun and Sultan Yacub, and that of its 131st Artillery Brigade to Kfar Danis. The issue of dealing with the Syrians thus began to grow ever more important, even more so as the SyAA and the SyAAF became involved in several engagements with the IDF.

91st 'GALLIL' DIVISION ON 7 JUNE 1982

Early on 7 June 1982, the 211th Brigade launched its advance on Sidon. In front was A Company, 126th Battalion, followed by A Company, 450th Battalion of the 828nd Brigade. At the entrance of the village of Sarafand from the south-east, the Israeli column was welcomed by the locals. However, when the tanks and APCs passed the main junction, they received small arms fire and the commander of the infantry company, Kibi Al'ezra, was instantly killed. Immediately after, a wave of RPG rounds hit the vehicles, setting ablaze one M113 and wounding everybody inside, killing a Merkava commander of the 126th Battalion, and damaging



A Map of 162nd Division's advances on 6 and 7 June 1982. (Map by Tom Cooper)

numerous other vehicles. Opening heavy fire towards all sides, the column managed to extricate itself from the village before stopping to take care of casualties.

Meanwhile, CO 9th Battalion, Shlomo Ariel, led two companies along the coastal route – codenamed Bokito – towards Zahrani and Sidon. His third element, K Company, spent the night near the village of el-Bazhouriyeh and was trying to catch up with the battalion. Passing Burj el-Chmali, the lead tank received a hit from an RPG and, while trying to reverse, struck a landmine. The company commander, Moshe Yatom, ordered his tank in between the damaged vehicle and enemy, but first struck a mine and then also took a hit from an RPG. Both crews evacuated from their tanks and joined the rest of the unit as this opened suppressive fire to drive away the ambushers. Both vehicles were eventually recovered by the technical element later the same day, and K Company managed to catch up with the rest of the battalion by the end of the day.

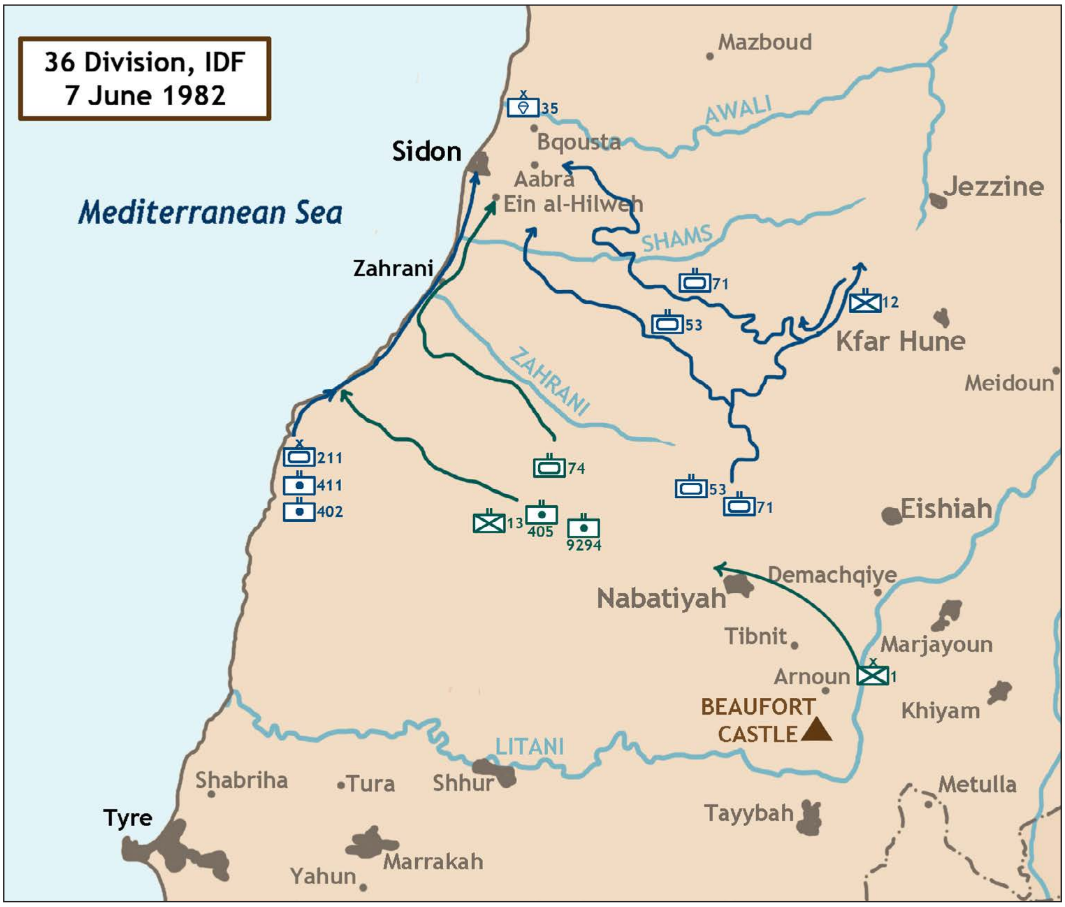
At Burj el-Chmali, following the failed nocturnal assault by the 906th Nahal Infantry Battalion of the 300th Brigade, the morning of 7 June began with tanks of the 429th Battalion mounting a new attack. The commander of V Company, Asher Fahn, led eight Magach 6B tanks, followed by the 906th Battalion. While directing fire at the nearest building, his tank drove into an irrigation ditch and became stuck: although targeted by multiple RPGs, it eventually found a way out. Gradually, tanks managed to either destroy or drive the Palestinians away and the fight was largely over by noon. The IDF suffered no serious personnel casualties other than that Fahn's tank hit a mine and then triggered an IED: it caught fire but the crew was able to evacuate with only minor injuries.

The Israelis did suffer losses elsewhere though. A column approaching the camp at Rashidiyah lost a M577 of the 411th Battalion to an RPG, together with its commander. Nevertheless, the column managed to encircle the camp, which was meanwhile hammered both by air strikes and artillery fire.

36th 'GA'ASH' DIVISION ON 7 JUNE 1982

Further east, during the night from 6 to 7 June, Kahalani received orders to move on Sidon, and then to exchange units: the 211th Brigade was reassigned to the 36th, while the 847th (Reserve) Brigade and two battalions of the 939th (Reserve) Paratrooper Brigade were subordinated to the 91st Division. Leaving the 769th Brigade to mop up the Nabatiyeh area, Kahalani's new force split into three taskforces, of which two turned north-west, towards the coast, and one continued north-east to cross the Zahrani at the bridge at Habbouch before approaching Sidon. By noon, the 13th Battalion of the 1st Golani Brigade joined the 211th as this was crossing the Zahrani: this was just in time as Geva's tanks were short on fuel but were able to refuel from Golani's supplies (M113s took fuel from a local gas station). Once north of the Zahrani, both brigades continued for Sidon, on the approaches to which they met the 74th Battalion of the 188th Brigade, 36th Division (CO Amiram Levin) and 13th Battalion of the 1st Golani Brigade.

The plan to secure Sidon envisaged an attack from two directions by three taskforces:


36 Division, IDF
7 June 1982
Mediterranean Sea
Sidon
Zahrani
Tyre
Mazboud
AWALI
Bqousta
Aabra
Ein al-Hilweh
SHAMS
Jezzine
Kfar Hune
Meidoun
ZAHRANI
Eishiah
Demachqiye
Nabatiyah
Tibnit
Marjayoun
Arnoun
BEAUFORT CASTLE
Khiyam
LITANI
Shabriha
Tura
Shhur
Metulla
Tayybah
Marrakah
Yahun
35
71
53
12
211
411
402
74
13
405
9294
53
71
1

A Map of 36th Division's advances on 7 June 1982. (Map by Tom Cooper)

- B Company of 13th Golani Infantry and H Company of 74th Battalion were to advance along the Bokito to the centre of the town;
- Balance of both the 13th Golani and the 74th battalions, reinforced by reconnaissance and antitank elements, was to secure el-Hilweh refugee camp;
- 12th Golani and the 53rd battalions were to punch through to the north-east, block approaches to the town and provide fire support.

Soltam M71 155mm towed howitzers of the 8193rd Battalion, 219th Artillery Brigade, in position outside Tyre. These guns were based on the GC-45 design by Gerald Bull, Canadian designer of the so-called Iraqi 'super-gun'. (Photo by Jean-Claude Coutausse)

Elsewhere in this area, the 71st Battalion of the 188th, and the 202nd Battalion of the 35th Paratrooper Brigade were to proceed north-west and clear Bqousta, thus closing the siege from that side, while the 211th Brigade (meanwhile down to its 9th and 126th Battalions, because the 429th was left with the 91st Division to help clear the Tyre area) was not to become involved, but bypass the area, cross the Savniq River and rendezvous with elements of the 96th Division. Needless to say that this was a complex, ad hoc plan, messing up the units and their missions. For example, Kahalani had to leave too many units behind in the Nabatiyah area because the IDF/AF had failed to 'soften it up', despite several promises. The CO of 91st Division, Mordechai, was still missing the 939rd Brigade: this was still travelling together with his unit's support trains from Tyre; the 71st Battalion had lost the commander of L Company, Uzi Arad, early that morning, who had been shot in a minor firefight. Similarly, the CO of 96th Division, Yaldin, was against handing over command of the 202nd Battalion from his already reduced force. However, General Headquarters insisted on a quick takeover of Sidon without causing too much damage: apparently – and whether on initiative from Sharon or Bashir Gemayel – Sidon was to be saved for the Christians, preferably without fighting. For this purpose, it ordered the IDF/AF to drop leaflets and only bomb buildings along the seashore, while ground forces were to deploy loudspeakers in an attempt to convince the opposition to give up or run away. Nothing of this worked: the IDF/AF dropped the leaflets on the positions of the 1st Golani Brigade while aerial bombardment and loudspeakers were entirely ineffective.

The actual result was only another delay: it was 1400hrs by the time 1st Golani Brigade began approaching its objectives. There was very little reliable information about the defences of Sidon, and thus its columns began probing towards their objectives – only to receive fire from multiple directions and back off. Fire support was reduced and

Sho't Kal tanks of Z ('Zeevim') Company, 74th Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade, taking positions next to the burning oil refinery at Zahrani on 7 June 1982. (Photo by Shmuel Rozenfeld)

Sho't tanks of the 294th Battalion, 847th Armoured Brigade, recovering a Magach tank of the 795th Battalion that flipped over and rolled downhill near Bqousta, during the night of 6 to 7 June, killing the platoon's leader, Lieutenant Shachar Guy. (Photo by Amir Abramovich)

provided by elements of the 219th Brigade from the 91st Division, and the 411th Battalion (which was actually attempting to follow the 211th Brigade's advance on Damour), both of which converged on the Sidon area. However, both units were short on ammunition after several fire missions in support of clearing operations all the way from the border with Israel during the previous day. Thus, additional ammunition had to be brought in by helicopters and that took yet more time.

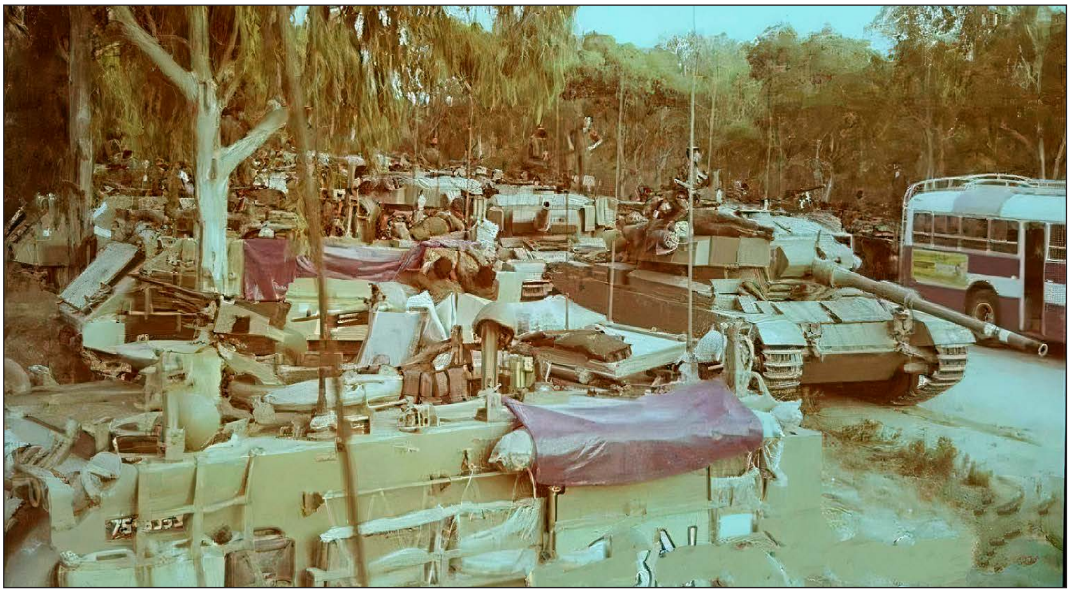
96th DIVISION ON 7 JUNE 1982

On the northern side of Sidon, by the morning of 7 June the troops of the 96th Division were still busy securing the hills at Bqousta and crossing the Awali River to block approaches to the town from that direction and prevent a possible interference in their landing zone. During the morning, additional units were flown in by helicopters, including the balance of Unit 5101 (by then assigned to the 35th Paratrooper Brigade), 7038th Heavy Mortar Battalion, and a company of 50th Paratrooper Battalion. This operation went well, except for the hills around Bqousta where the 202nd Battalion (CO Israel 'Rali' Landsberg) found itself surrounded by numerous Palestinian groups deployed in superior positions and supported by plentiful RPGs and several T-34/85s. A Company (CO Meir Klipi) took massive volumes of fire and suffered heavy losses: it had to be replaced by the Battalion Fire Support Company (CO Doron Avital). A tank platoon of the 795th Battalion attempted to help, but its leading tank received a hit which forced its driver to reverse. While withdrawing, it rolled downhill and flipped over, killing its commander. Eventually, the 202nd Battalion had to be reinforced by tanks of the 71st Battalion of the 188th Brigade in order to accomplish its task of sealing the northern approaches to Sidon, and the overall outcome of the Israeli efforts in this area were far from satisfactory that day.

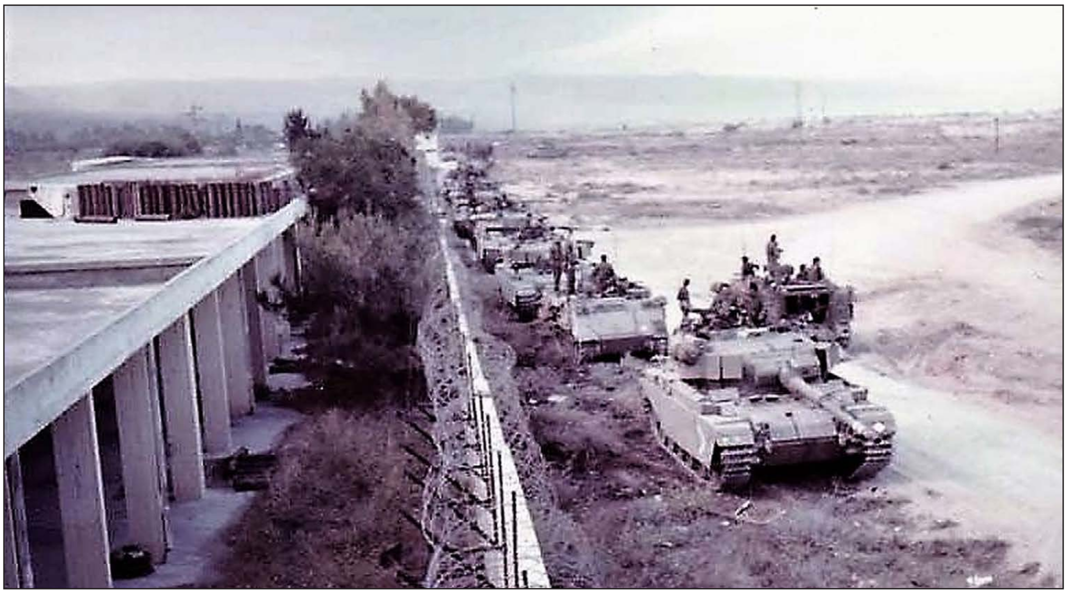
SECURING TYRE

The plan for Operation Peace for Galilee envisaged the IDF clearing the area of greater Tyre within 22 hours of the start of the operation, and securing the Old City within another 12 hours. This proved overoptimistic by the first day of the invasion. By the morning of 7 June, the task was given to Itzik Mordechai's 91st Division. In turn, he organised three task forces, one attacking from the north and two from the south:

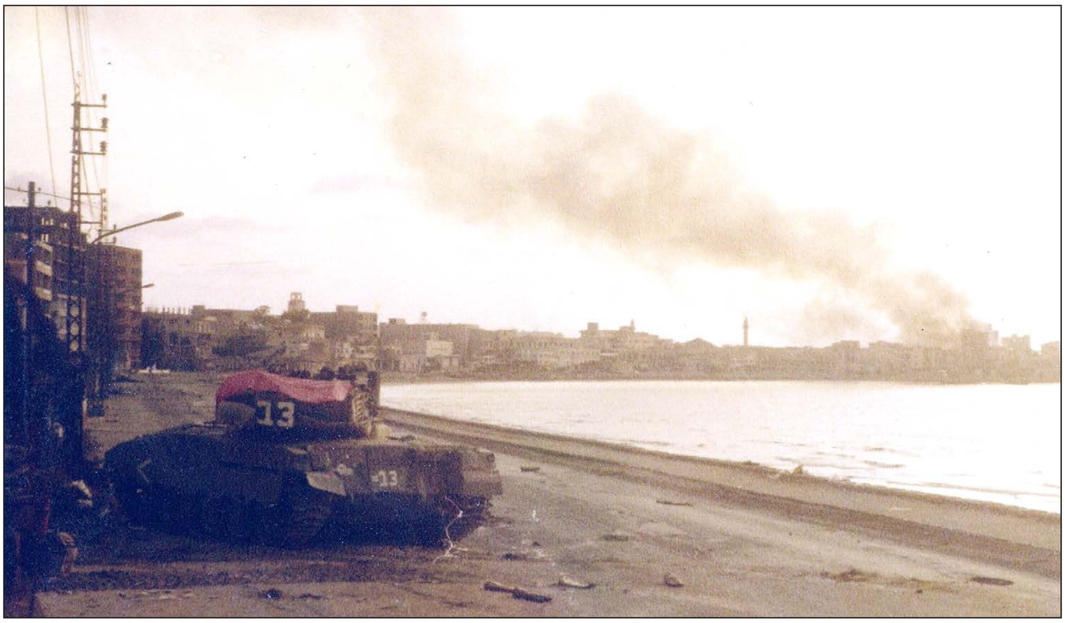
- 828th Brigade was to attack from the north, reinforced by two companies from the 429th Battalion (211th Brigade), and included two reduced companies of the doomed 450th Battalion;
- 847th (Reserve) Armoured Brigade, which included only its own 294th Battalion, and had to be reinforced by the 9255th Battalion from 939th Brigade; and
- 939th (Reserve) Paratrooper Brigade, which included its own 7056th Battalion, and 293rd Battalion from 847th



Camping area at Tira, outside Haifa, with vehicles of the 7056th Battalion, 939th Paratrooper Brigade, and 293rd Battalion, 847th Armoured Brigade, seen shortly before both units entered Lebanon on 7 June 1982 (Photo by Avi Aviel)



Sho't Kal tanks of the 293rd Battalion, 847th Armoured Brigade, in the Tyre area. (via Efim Sandler)



Merkava Mk 1 tanks of the 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade, seen entering Tyre from the north. The dense smoke is rising from a gas station that had been hit by phosphorous rounds on 7 June 1982. (via Asher Fahn)

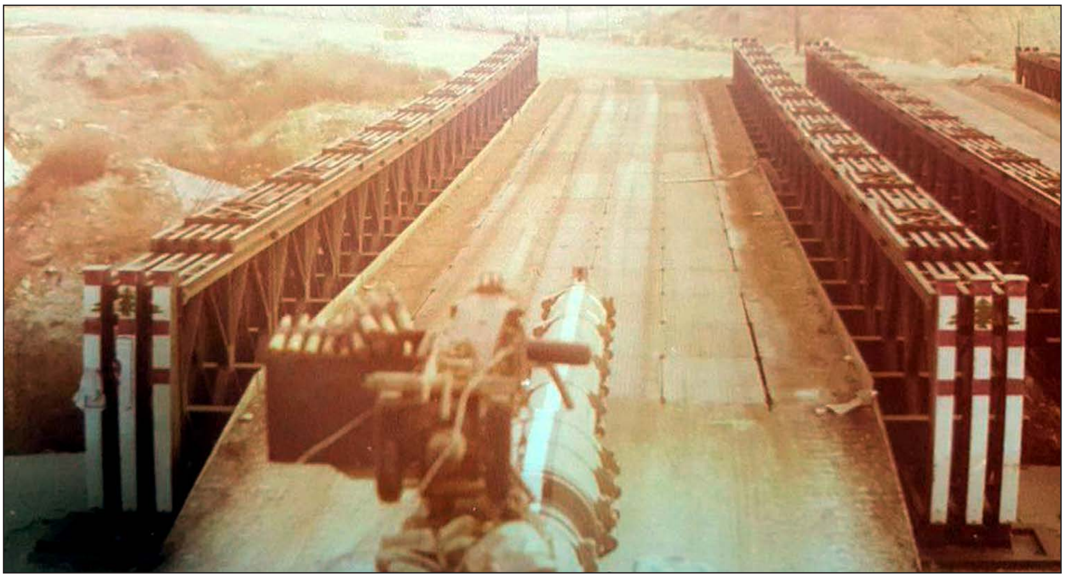
Brigade, both of which entered Lebanon on the morning of 7 June.

According to the intelligence provided by Northern Command, they were facing an infantry battalion of Fatah, commanded by Azmi Zayar, with about 1,500 combatants. The IDF/AF repeatedly dropped leaflets over Tyre, calling upon them not to resist, and – to the surprise of many – this worked to quite some extent.

The 847th Brigade was the first to approach Tyre, at around 1030hrs. L Company of the 294th Battalion, supported by a company of paratroopers, moved on the Old City, while the rest of the 9255th Battalion with a tank company took positions opposite Rashidiyah. Accompanied by the battalion CO, Moshe Peled, L Company (CO Eli Fadida), opened fire at the buildings. In a matter of minutes, white flags began appearing almost everywhere, and the CO of 847th Brigade, Uzi Keren, reported to Mordechai that he had to start evacuating civilians from one building after another. This task was accomplished in cooperation with the Red Cross and the city mayor, George Haddad. Civilians were all brought to the beach for cross-examination by investigators from Unit 504. At some point in time, an ambulance car appeared, bringing Shmuel Gideon, a wounded tank crewman of the 9th Battalion: to his good fortune, he was taken to the local hospital before the Palestinians could get him, and thus survived.

Encountering a similar situation, the 939th Brigade entered Tyre from the south only around 1500hrs. By then, the 828th Brigade was approaching from the north. Both movements were supported by artillery and tank fire, and one shell set on fire the central gas station. Supported

M113 APCs of the 450th Battalion, 828nd Brigade, following tanks of the 429th Battalion into Tyre on 7 June 1982. (Photo by Moti Goldrat)



A Merkava Mk 1 tank of Z ('Zoher') Company, 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade, about to cross a bridge over the Zahrani River on 7 June 1982. (Photo by Ilan Friedland)

M113s belonging to IDF mechanised infantry, near Tyre, on 7 June 1982. Notable is the large amount of crew gear and boxes with spare parts attached to the outside the vehicle. (Photo by Dan Hadani)

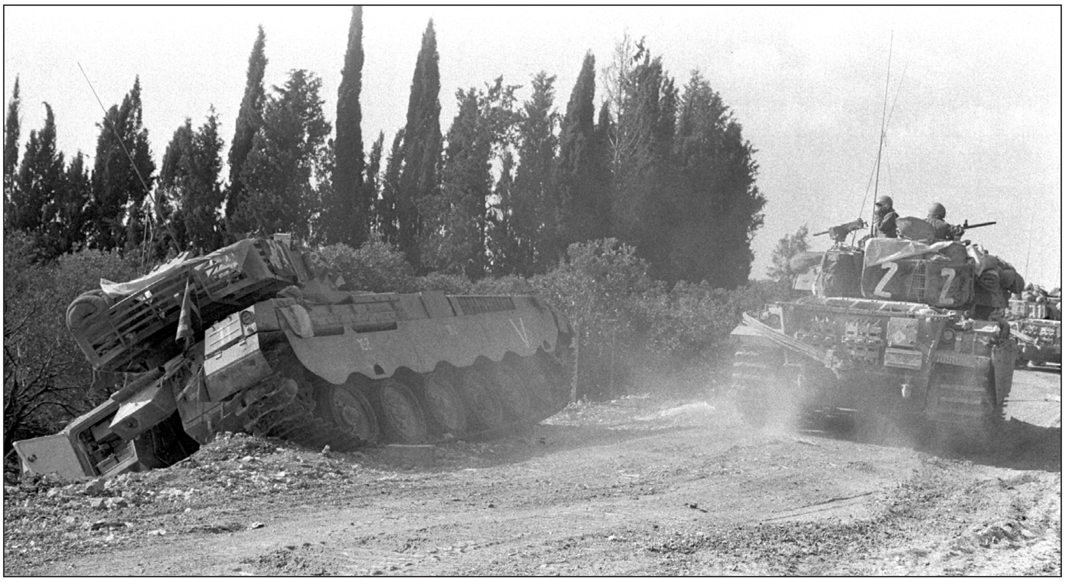
by tanks of the 293rd Battalion, the 7056th Battalion swept on foot, meeting only occasional resistance from small arms fire. On the contrary, Merkavas of Amos Malka's 429th Battalion, with remnants of the 450th Battalion 'in tow', entered the town from the north after a short artillery preparation, and encountered no resistance whatsoever. Tyre was reported as 'taken' by 1600hrs, but the clearing operations went on into the next day, by when between 600 and 700 Palestinian militants were rounded up by Unit 504, though the Palestinian commander managed to flee unobserved.

IRON TRIANGLE

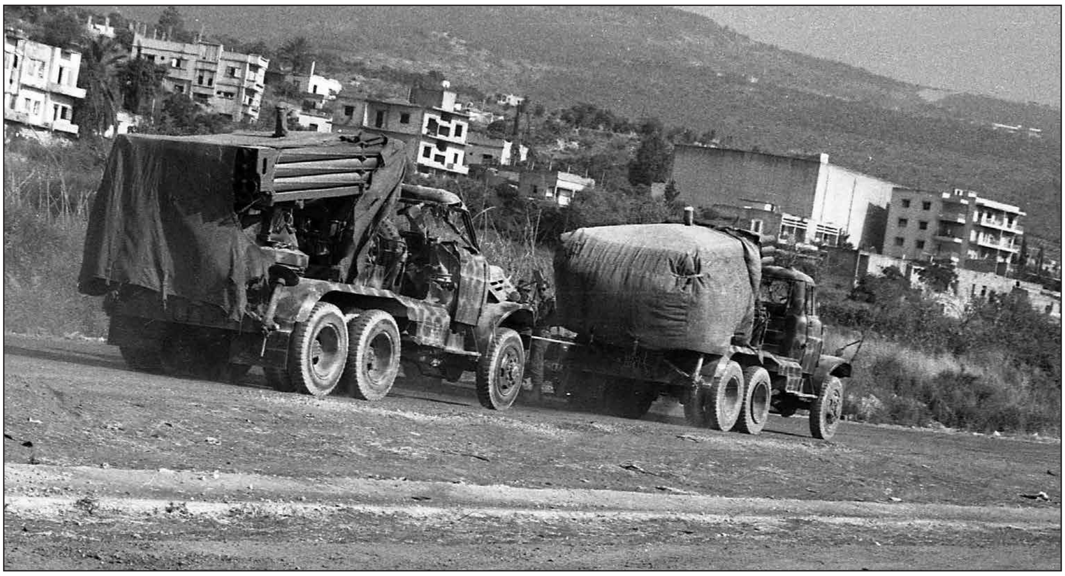
The 'Iron Triangle' – the area between the villages of Qana, Dayr Aames, and Jouaiyya – held one of the biggest concentration of Fatah bases, and was thus considered a hotspot of militant activity. The mission to clear it was of such importance that it was run directly by Northern Command. Early on 7 June, the 165th (Reserve) Infantry Brigade (CO Zvi Poleg) moved out of its camp near the Kibbutz Sasa and entered Lebanon at Border Mark 14. The unit in the lead was the 7003rd Battalion, which marched via Rmeich on Bint Jubayl. The next unit was the 7002nd Battalion, which upon reaching Bint Jubayl turned west on Dayr Aamas, Mahrouna and Jouaiyya to join 17th Battalion that was marching from its camping position near Qana. The latter of the three was reached by tanks of the 429th Battalion, around 1400hrs, while the infantry was still mopping up.

Meanwhile, the 7003rd Battalion continued in a northern direction and reached Tibnin, then turned north-east. Next to it, 9316th Battalion advanced on Jouaiyya and the two units met at Tayr Zibna where they were joined by tanks of the 275th Battalion

(CO Ilan Eshel, from the 847th Brigade).[2] The march continued, and around 1600hrs the 7003rd Battalion passed Qallawiyah on the eastern approaches to Tyre. Despite expectations to the contrary, this advance proved rather uneventful, with the majority of locals showing white flags, and in some places even greeting Israeli convoys with rice and candy. While tanks did destroy several Palestinian vehicles, the most the Israelis encountered was small arms fire and a few imprecise mortar rounds. Thus, by 1730hrs, the sweep of the Iron Triangle was completed, and all units went into their night bivouac: the following day, all marched to the Tyre area, where they reported to the 91st Division. The sole exception was the 7002nd Battalion, which continued combing the Iron Triangle for another day.


A Sho't Kal tank of the 847th Brigade passing a troubled Merkava Mk 1 of the 211th Brigade, outside Tyre, on 7 June 1982. (Photo by Yoel Kantor)

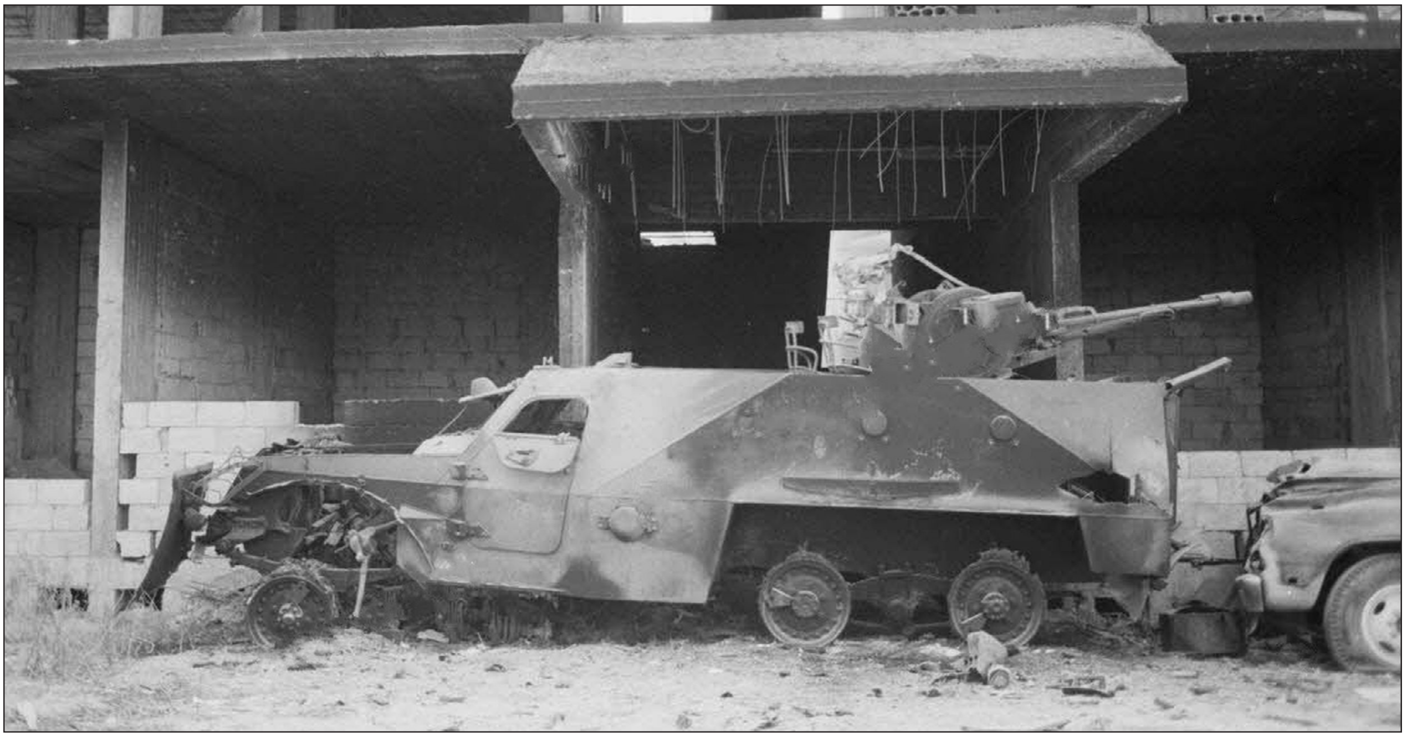
APCs of the 500th Armoured Brigade, 162nd Division, moving inside Lebanon on 7 June 1982. (via Efim Sandler)


Abandoned Palestinian BM-21 MRLS captured by the advancing Israelis outside Tyre on 7 June 1982. (Photo by Dan Hadani)

500th BRIGADE MOVING NORTH

Commanded by Doron Rubin, the leading element of the 162nd Division to cross the bridge at Aquia, the 500th Brigade, advanced on Jezzine. Its foremost element, the 433rd Battalion, finally managed to collect all of its elements – including a company of the 532nd Battalion of the Tank Commanders School (assigned from the 460th Brigade) – and rushed forward. In a hurry, during the approach to the bridge at Habouch on the Zahrani River, one of 433rd Battalion's Magach-6B tanks slipped down a slope into the water and had to be abandoned. That said, the brigade was complete by around 1400hrs.

The march went on with Rubin's HQ in front, followed by the 932nd Nahal Battalion and the 433rd. From Arab Salim, the column proceeded to Jarju, where it encountered fire from the orchards on the other side of the settlement. In the following firefight, the battalion



A destroyed BTR-152 APC of the PLO found inside Tyre. Note the ZU-23-2 antiaircraft gun installed in the fighting compartment. (Photo by Jean-Claude Coutausse)

CO, Beni 'Benga' Beit-Or was mortally wounded, and had to be replaced by his deputy, Rami Eldad.

The 500th Brigade continued moving and by 2000hrs reached Homsiyeh. At that point, Rubin decided to position the 433rd Battalion to block the route to Jezzine and continue with the rest of his force on Qtaleh via Roum. The brigade stopped only around 2200hrs, by when it was joined by the 9263rd Battalion of the 939th Paratrooper Brigade: at dusk, this unit came under fire from a hill to the east, which it counterattacked, destroying a BTR-60 in the process. It became apparent that the position in question was Syrian.

The night from 7 to 8 June 1982 was very dark, and thus no sweeps around the bivouac were undertaken. Because of this, the Syrians were able to start deploying their commandos from the area between Jezzine and Kfar Hune across the route of advance of the 162nd Division. Of course, at the time this remained unknown to Einan and his HQ. Because updated intelligence from Northern Command

A dramatic photo taken from the driver's seat of a Magach-6B of the 184th Battalion, 14th Armoured Brigade, while the unit was entering Lebanon late in the afternoon of 6 June 1982. The troops were moving under imprecise, but constant shelling by the artillery of the Syrian Arab Army. (Photo by Efi Belker)

An M113 'Fitter' of the Company Technical Team of the 79th Battalion, 14th Armoured Brigade, moving over the fires caused by Palestinian mortar rounds in the Marjayoun area on 7 June 1982. (Photo by Ariel Kirtchuk)

The M113 of the 424th Battalion, 252nd Division, hit by a Syrian 130mm shell near Khilweh. The vehicle was completely destroyed: one crewmember was badly injured and evacuated by a Bell 206 helicopter. (Photo by Zvika Israeli)

failed to reach the 162nd Division, they were only aware of the fact that their further advance in a northern direction would bring them closer to the Syrian units. Nevertheless, Northern Command was already in the process of bolstering Einan's assets in case of a bigger clash. Correspondingly, it ordered two battalions equipped with M107s (55th and 334th) to move closer to Jezzine, while two batteries of the 403rd Battalion had already been brought into position right behind the 500th Brigade.[3]

TASK FORCE VARDI

During 7 June, Northern Command decided to deploy a division-sized taskforce commanded by Dan Vardi into Lebanon. Organisations-wise, Task Force Vardi reported to the 446th Command under Yanush Ben-Gal. The core of this unit was the 460th Armoured Brigade (the School of Armour), commanded by Hagai Kohen, which camped near Qatsrin and originally served as a backup for the Golan Heights, before being reassigned to the 162nd Division. The 460th consisted of three regular units, the 196th, 198th, and 532nd Battalions, and a single company of reservists. The idea was to rush Vardi's troops into the area between Kfar Hune and Jazzine, and thus isolate the Palestinian forces west of it from Syrian positions in the Beka'a: however, none of this was ever planned or properly considered, and the 460th Armoured Brigade never

Chief of the Artillery Corps IDF, Arye Mizrachi (sunglasses) seen visiting a unit operating M109s in Lebanon in 1982. (IDF Artillery Corps)

Headquarters vehicles of an unknown IDF brigade deployed inside southern Lebanon on 7 June 1982. (Harvard Collection)

trained such a task, nor had it ever been a part of 446th Command's planning.

With Kohen not being of the kind to discuss his orders, his brigade moved out on the morning of 7 June: it crossed the border at the Egel Gate, east of Metula, and joined the 162nd Division, then crossed the Litani River at the Khardale bridge, before moving on Arab Salim and Jbaa. Early during the afternoon, Kohen was then informed – by radio – that his brigade had been reassigned to the newly established Task Force Vardi. During the following few hours, he was busy deploying his elements into night bivouacs:

- 196th Battalion north of Arab Salim
- 198th Battalion north of Jbaa
- 532nd Battalion (minus one company) in Arab Salim.

Except for five M113s of the Reconnaissance Company, five other APCs and a reserve battery of TCM-20 self-propelled antiaircraft guns (essentially 20mm AA guns mounted on old US-made M3 half-tracks), the tanks were entirely alone: there was no infantry screen to protect them. However, after an uneventful day, Kohen was looking to replace the 433rd Battalion in the blocking position near Jezzine.

252nd 'SINAI' DIVISION ON 7 JUNE 1982

Most of 7 June, the 252nd Division remained in the positions it had reached the previous day. Emanuel Sakal had been called for a briefing by the commander of the 446th Command, and was informed that his division would henceforth report to the 446th. During this meeting he had to give up two of his major units: the 14th Armoured Brigade and the 261st Armoured Brigade (the latter was staffed by instructors from the School of Officers) were transferred to the 90th Division, commanded by Giora Lev. Instead, it was promised that he would receive the Merkava-equipped 7th Brigade, the 623rd (Reserve) Paratrooper Brigade, and a few lesser units. Amongst the latter were Sho't Kal MBTs of the 9204th Battalion (514th Brigade), and a team from Sayeret Matkal (designated the 9618th Battalion for Operation Peace of Galilee), both fresh from joint training.

The division began receiving sporadic and mostly imprecise Syrian artillery fire, though one 130mm shell hit a M113 of the 424th Battalion in the al-Khalweh area: the vehicle was completely destroyed in the resulting fire, and one of its crewmembers was badly injured.

NORTHERN COMMAND AND GENERAL HEADQUARTERS

All through 7 June, AMAN, Northern Command, and the General Headquarters IDF were carefully monitoring the deployment of the Syrian Arab Army's 424th Battalion of the 62nd Brigade in the area around Aramta and Aichiyeh, the 85th Brigade's 330th Battalion and elements of the 36th Commando Brigade in Jezzine and Kfar Hune, and considered it possible that these would be reinforced by PLO or PLA battalions brought in from the Beirut area. Finally, Israeli military intelligence was 'pretty sure' that the 76th Brigade of the SyAA was already in Lebanon, even if having no idea about the whereabouts of the 58th Brigade. By the end of the day, reports about three clashes with Syrian forces had come in:

- 162nd Division had been ambushed by SyAA commandos in the Jarju area;
- 12th Battalion of the 1st Golani Brigade (assigned to the 36th Division), came under Syrian artillery fire and then knocked out a BTR-50 in the Zhalta area, and
- A MiG-23MS was shot down while trying to intercept fighter-bombers of the IDF/AF in the Beirut area.

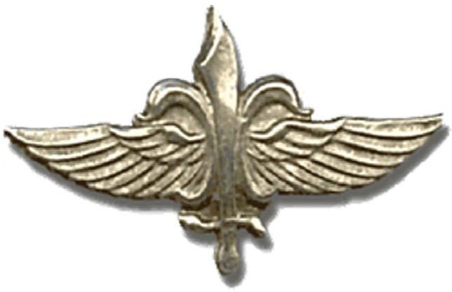
Correspondingly, Sharon defined two major objectives for the next 23 hours: the first was to push with two divisions all the way to the Beirut–Damascus Highway and engage Syrians there. This task was assigned to the 162nd Division, which was to move north and reach the crucial communication in the Dahr el-Baydar area, and to the 36th Division, which was to bypass Sidon and move on Muderej. To Begin's cabinet, Sharon then explained that Operation Peace for Galilee was largely concluded, 'but' that there was a threat from the parts of Lebanon controlled by the Syrians, which required 'a few additional steps….probably engaging Syrian forces if these would not back off'. Misinformed, the ministers thus granted permission to continue the operation, but explicitly forbade any engagement with the Syrians at this point.

APPENDIX

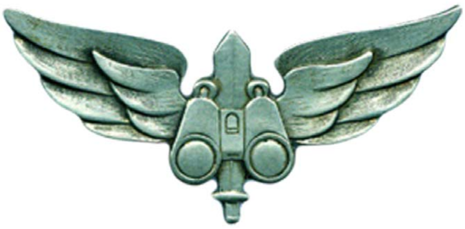
IDF ORBAT (6-8 JUNE1982)

General HQ/Regional Commands		
	Unit 269 CO: Uzi Dayan	Sayeret Matkal
	869th Observation Battalion CO: Yehoshua Tzur	Part of Northern Command Intelligence
8505th Artillery Brigade CO: Moshe Tal		Reporting to General HQ
	9275th Battalion CO: Moshe Aizenberg	MGM-52 Lance, Ha-Menapetz (Heb – Shatterer) Reporting to Northern Command, not employed during the war
	418th Battalion CO: Yair Koren	290mm Haviv rocket Reserve Reporting to 446 Command
	9229th Battalion CO: Uri Faigstein	240mm BM-24-12 Reserve Used during blockade of Beirut
	9618th Battalion (ad-hoc) CO: Mordechai Perl	122mm BM-21s captured during the early stages of the war Reserve Used during blockade of Beirut
219th Artillery Brigade (Ra'am) CO: Amnon Ofek XO: Reuven Levi		Northern Command
422nd Artillery Brigade CO: Moshe Har'el XO: Rafi Adar		From Southern Command
525th Paratrooper Brigade (Shualei Merom) CO: Dubi Helman XO: Eran Meiri		From Southern Command
	466th Battalion CO: Amiram Zakin	Attached to 162nd Division
	420th Battalion CO: Avner Hermoni	Attached to 880th Division
	8105th Battalion	Took part at later stage

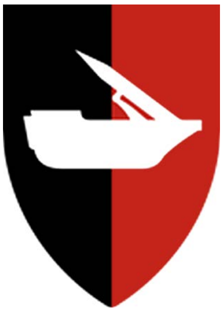
General HQ/Regional Commands



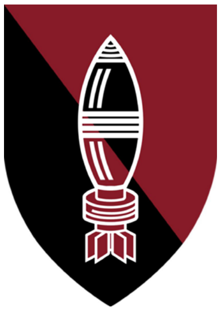
Unit 269



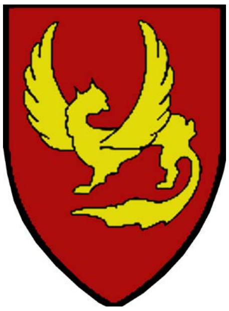
869th Observation Battalion



9275th Battalion



219th Artillery Brigade (Ra’am)

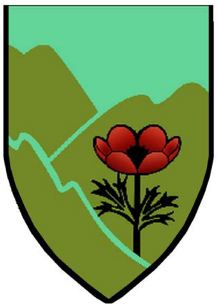


525th Paratrooper Brigade

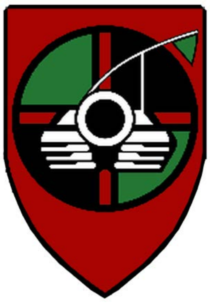
91st Division (Galil)		
211th Armoured Brigade (Yishay) Commander: Eli Geva XO: Yechiam Sasson		Transferred to 36th Division from 8 June 1982
	126th Battalion (Nachshon) CO: Yadid Gilad	Merkava Mk 1
	429th Battalion (Romach) CO: Amos Malka	V Company: Magach Z and H Companies: Merkava Mk 1
	9th Battalion (Eshet) CO: Shlomo Ariel	Magach 6B
847th Armoured Brigade (Merkavot Ha-Plada) CO: Uzi Keren XO: Shlomo Yanay		Reserve Shot Kal-B
	275th Battalion CO: Ilan Eshel	Northern Command Armor Battalion, Reporting to 165th Brigade. 91st Division from 8 June 1982
	293rd Battalion CO: Haim Shnahar	
	294th Battalion CO: Moshe Peled	
939th Paratrooper Brigade (Nesher) CO: Yair Ogen XO: Amnon Aliaz		Reserve Reduced
	9255th Battalion CO: Dani Zeevi	
	7056th Battalion CO: Haim Beker	
	Special Units Battalion (ad-hoc)	Reconnaissance, Antitank, Engineers
165th Infantry Brigade (Carmeli) CO: Zvi Poleg		Reserve Reporting to 91st Division from 8 June 1982
	9316th Battalion CO: Gali Hoss	
	7002nd Battalion CO: Yakov Levitan	Reporting to 847th Brigade
	7003rd Battalion CO: Elisha Yalin	
828th Infantry NCO Training Brigade (Bislamah) CO: Amos Katsir XO: Shlomo Dekel		
	450th Battalion (Paratroopers) CO: Ori Geiger/Itzkhak Eitan (after Geiger's death)	
	906th Battalion (Nakhal) CO: Zalman Kovransky XO: Arik Feuer	Reporting to 300th Brigade until 9 June
	17th Battalion (Golani) CO: Udi Shemkhoni	Reporting to Northern Command until 8 June 1982
	Special Units Battalion (ad-hoc) CO: Shlomo Dekel	Reconnaissance, Antitank, Engineers. All reserve
	299th Battalion (Herev)	Druze unit
	Reconnaissance Company	Attached from 609th Alexandroni Brigade

91st Division (Galil)		
	Recon Unit 244	
	904th Battalion CO: Dani Tofus/Arik Yaul	Included personnel of 908th Nakhal Infantry Battalion (Training Base 80)
7338th Artillery Brigade (Adirim) CO: Amos Tur		Reserve
	411th Battalion (Keren) CO: Yoram Raviv	M109, from 282nd Brigade
	402nd Battalion (Reshef) CO: Eyal Bar-David	Two batteries of M109, from 215th Brigade
	Artillery Observation Battalion (ad-hoc) CO: Arnon Ben-Ami	Manned by School of Artillery instructors
	Mortar Battalion CO: David Nachum	120mm mortars, 219th Brigade
Air Defence	**947th Battalion (Golan)** CO: Israel Shar'el	Vulcan, Red Eye MANPAD
Engineers	**605th Battalion (Mahatz)** CO: Eitan Lidor	Elements assigned from 36th Division
Support	**651st Territorial Ordnance Unit** CO: Yehuda Yazrieli	From Northern Command
	671st Divisional Signals Battalion (Nofim)	
	530th Division Logistics Battalion	

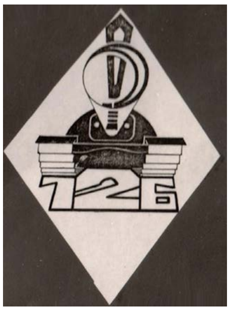
91st Division (Galli)



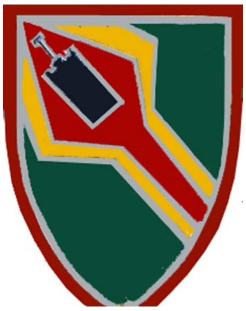
91st Division (Galli)



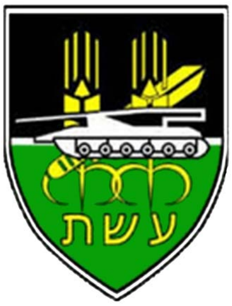
211th Armoured Brigade (Yishay)



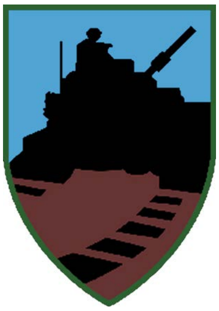
126th Battalion (Nachshon)



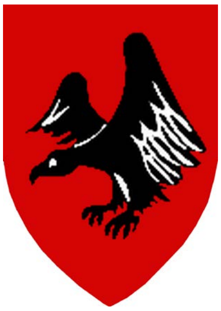
429th Battalion (Romach)



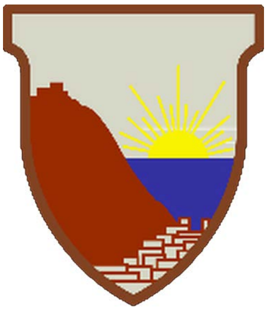
9th Battalion (Eshet)



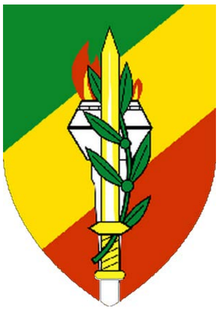
847th Armoured Brigade (Merkavot Ha-Plada)



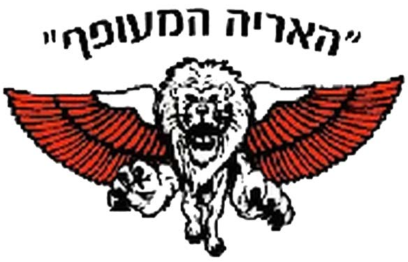
939th Paratrooper Brigade (Nesher)



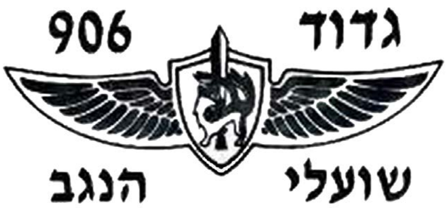
165th Infantry Brigade (Carmeli)



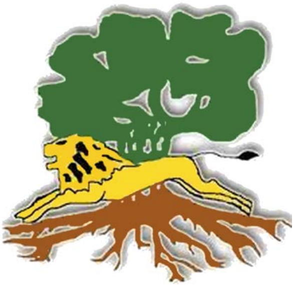
828th Infantry NCO Training Brigade (Bislamah)



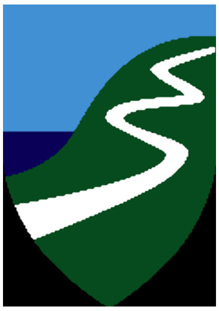
450th Battalion (Paratroopers)



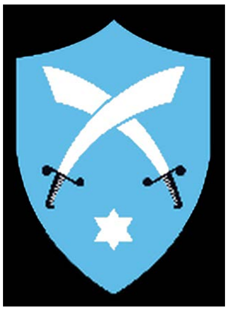
906th Battalion (Nakhal)



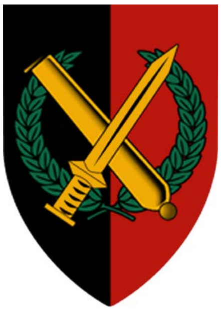
17th Battalion (Golani)



300th Territorial Brigade (Bar’am)

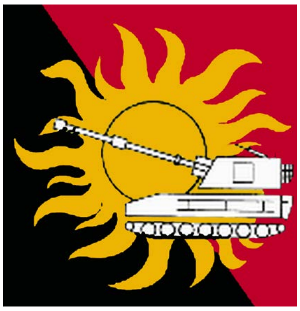


299th Battalion (Herev)

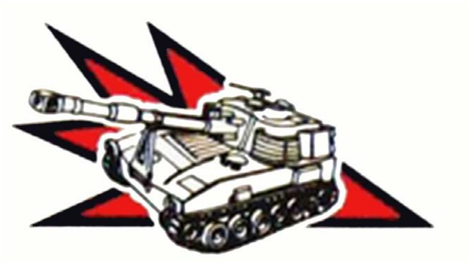


7338th Artillery Brigade (Adirim)

91st Division (Galli)

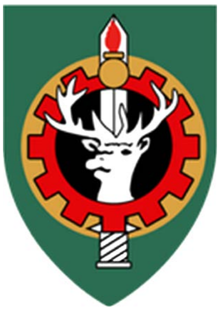


411th Battalion (Keren)

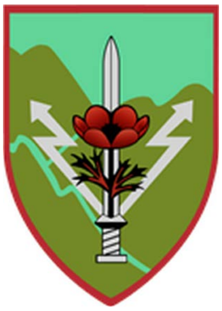


402nd Battalion (Reshef)

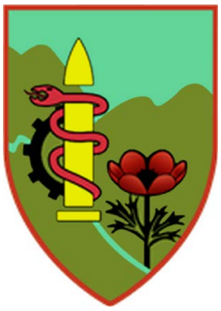
947th Battalion (Golan)



651st Territorial Ordnance Unit



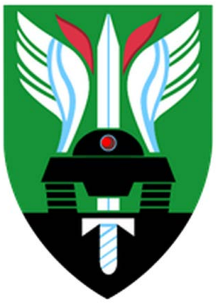
671st Divisional Signals Battalion (Nofim)

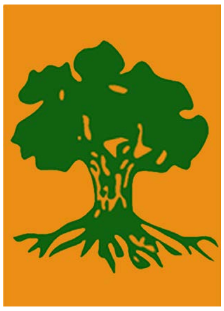


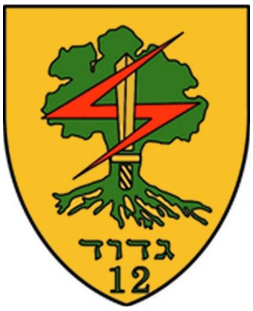
530th Division Logistics Battalion

36th Division (Ga’ash)		
1st Golani Infantry Brigade CO: Erwin Lavy XO: Gabi Ashkenazi		
	12th Battalion (Barak) CO: Yossi Biran	
	13th Battalion (Gideon) CO: Moti Mizrachi	
	51st Battalion (Ha-Boquim Ha-Rishon) CO: Yaakov Amar	
188th Armoured Brigade (Barak) Commander: Meir Dagan		Shot Kal-G
	53rd Battalion (Sufa) CO: Haim Morano	
	74th Battalion (Sa’ar) CO: Amiram Levin	
	71st Battalion (Reshef) CO: Eyal Ben-Reuven	
769th Territorial Brigade (Hiram) Commander: Shaul Mofaz		
	920th Battalion	Reserve infantry
	77th Battalion (Oz) CO: Dubik Rozental	From 7th Armoured Brigade
Engineers	**605th Battalion (Mahatz)** CO: Eitan Lidor	
282nd Artillery Brigade (Golan) Commander: Itzik Gazit		
	411th Battalion (Keren) CO: Yoram Raviv	
	405th Battalion (Namer) CO: Hezi Nagar	
	5152nd Observation Battalion CO: Yehuda Avidrori	From Northern Command
	9294th (?) Battalion CO: Yohanan Kibri	M109
Air Defence	**947th Battalion (Golan)**	Vulcan, Red Eye MANPAD
Support	**703rd Territorial Ordnance Unit** CO: Ezra Tzuk	
	702nd Ordnance Service Battalion CO: Yoram Harduf	Reduced Battalion
	6036th Divisional Logistics Battalion	
	389th Divisional Signals Battalion (Sion)	

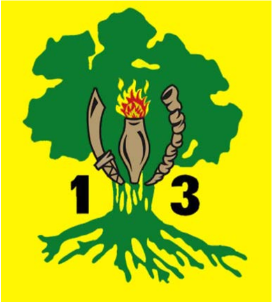
36th Division (Ga'ash)


36th Division (Ga'ash)

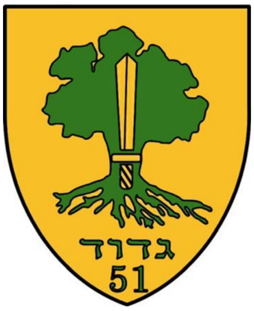

1st Golani Infantry Brigade



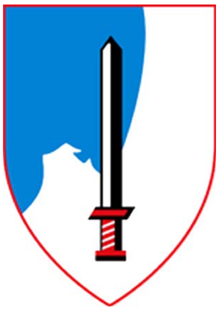
12th Battalion (Barak)

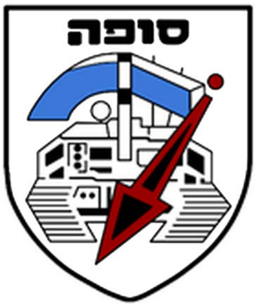


13th Battalion (Gideon)

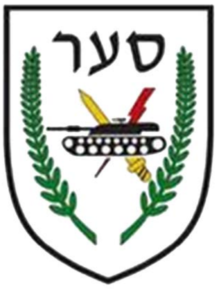


51st Battalion (Ha-Boquim Ha-Rishon)

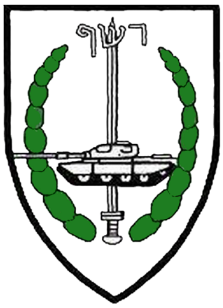

188th Armoured Brigade (Barak)



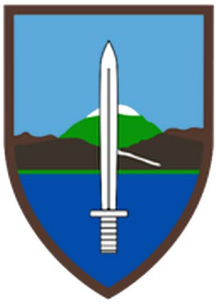
53rd Battalion (Sufa)

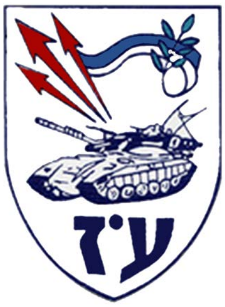


74th Battalion (Sa'ar)

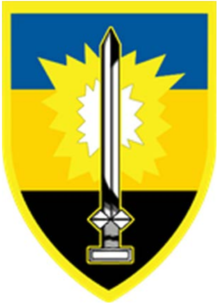


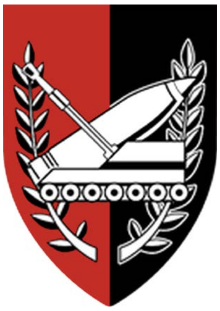
71st Battalion (Reshef)

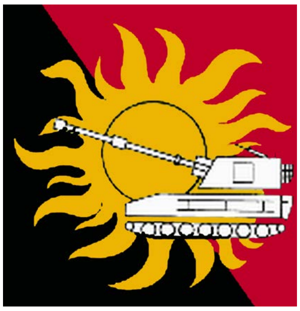

769th Territorial Brigade (Hiram)

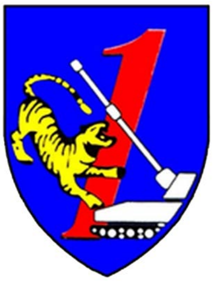


77th Battalion (Oz)


605th Battalion (Mahatz

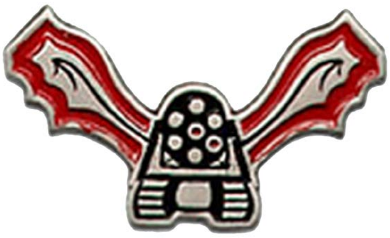

282nd Artillery Brigade (Golan)


411th Battalion (Keren)

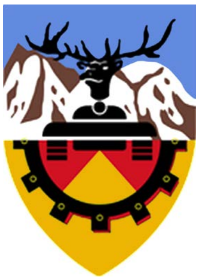


405th Battalion (Namer)

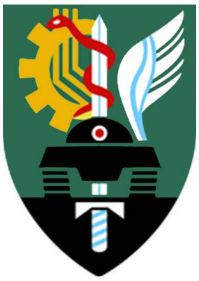
36th Division (Ga'ash)



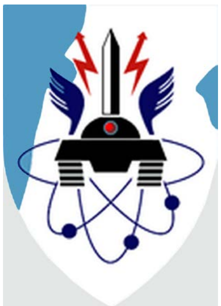
947th Battalion (Golan)



703rd Territorial Ordnance Unit



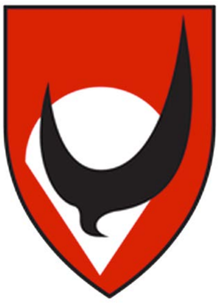
6036th Divisional Logistics Battalion

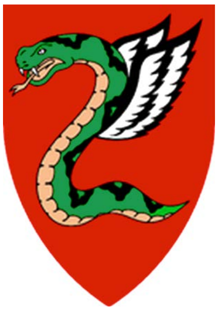


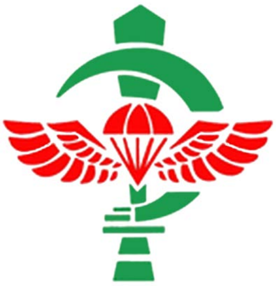
389th Divisional Signals Battalion (Sion)

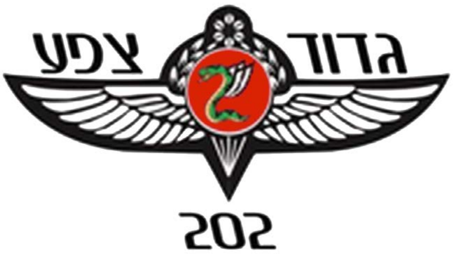
96th Division (Esh)		
35th Paratrooper Brigade Commander: Yoram Yair (Ya-Ya)		
	50th Battalion (Basalt) CO: Moshe Bachar	
	202nd Battalion (Viper) CO: Israel Landsberg (Rali)	
	890th Battalion (Ef'aa) CO: Mati Harari	
	Special Units Battalion (ad-hoc) CO: Doron Avrutsky (Almog)	Existed only during the 1982 war
	Unit 5101 (Shaldag) CO: Giora Inbar	Reserve duty unit, reporting to 35th Brigade
844th Armoured Brigade (School of Armour) CO: Hagai Regev		Assigned from Armoured Corps Command
	795th Battalion CO: Yossi Morag (Chich) XO: Tzvika Yakobson	Mixed unit of Magach (M60) and Sho't (Centurion) tanks
	796th Battalion (ad-hoc)	Based mostly on 491st Battalion/844th Brigade personnel. Equipped with Merkava Mk 1 tanks
9693rd Artillery Brigade (Ball of Fire) Commander: Shimon Rom XO: Ran Kohen		
	7038th Battalion CO: Haki Porat XO: Hilel Aharman	120mm mortars
	8193rd Battalion CO: David Boaz	155mm Soltam M71 howitzers From 219th Brigade
	7041st Artillery Battalion CO: Asher Diamant	122mm D-30 howitzers
	Artillery Observation Battalion (ad-hoc) CO: Yoni Shimshoni	Manned by School of Artillery instructors
	402nd Battalion CO: Eyal Bar-David	M109, From 215th Brigade
	412th Battalion CO: Ami Shilo	Battery of M107/M110 From 219th Brigade
Air Defence	**66th ADA Battalion**	A Company of M163 Vulcan SPAA
Support	**650th Territorial Ordnance Unit**	Ad-hoc Forward Company
	492nd Divisional Signals Battalion (Lapid)	
	Divisional Logistics Battalion (Shachnai – Pelican)	

96th Division (Esh)

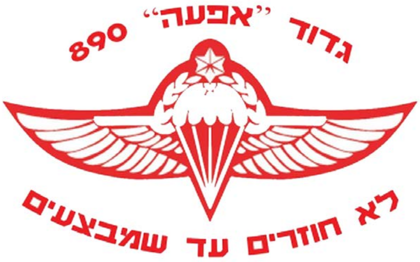

96th Division (Esh)


35th Paratrooper Brigade

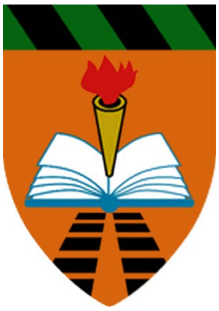

50th Battalion (Basalt)

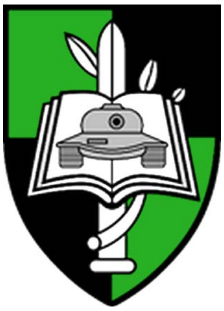


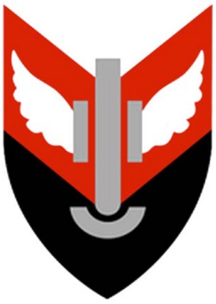
202nd Battalion (Viper)

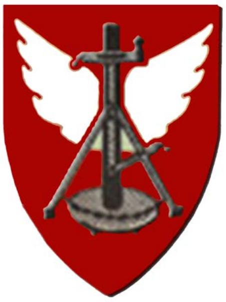


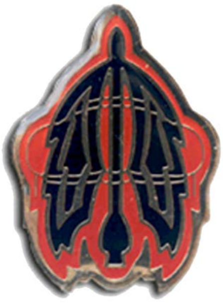
890th Battalion (Ef'aa)

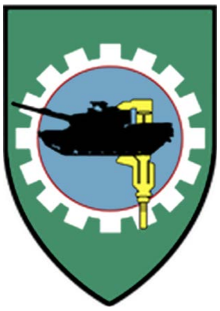

844th Armoured Brigade
(School of Armour)

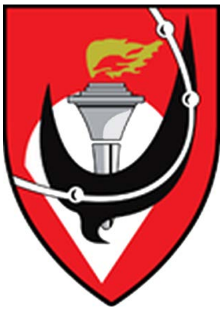

795th Battalion

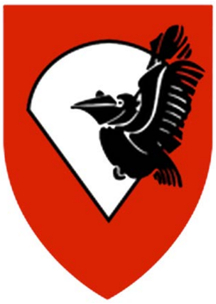

9693rd Artillery Brigade (Ball of Fire)


7038th Battalion


66th ADA Battalion


650th Territorial Ordnance Unit

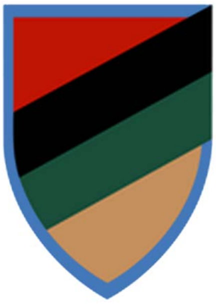

492nd Divisional Signals
Battalion (Lapid)


Divisional Logistics Battalion
(Shachnai – Pelican)

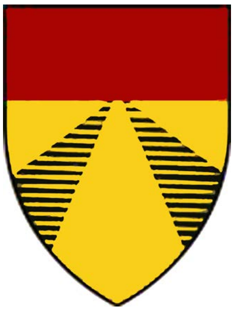
252nd Division (Sinai)		**From Southern Command**
401st Armoured Brigade (Yikvot Ha-Barzel) Commander: Uzi Lev-Tzur XO: Itzhak Lev-Ari		
	46th Battalion (Shelach) CO: Tzvika Farid XO:	
	52nd Battalion (Ha-Boqim) CO: Uri Agmon	On 6 June 1982 one company of Magach 6G (M60A3 TTS)
	3477th Battalion CO: Ofer Pir'am	Reserve. Disbanded in July 1982 and reformed into 34th Battalion
	34th Battalion	Formed in July 1982 based on 3477th Battalion (Reserve). Manned by Yeshiva students.
14th Armoured Brigade (Mahatz) Commander: Dov Shuval XO: Arye Ben-Kish		Reporting to 90th Division from 8 June 1982 184th Battalion 79th Battalion 8576th Battalion from 177th Brigade/611th Division
	9206th Battalion CO: Menachem Levi	From 514th Brigade
261st Brigade (School of Officers) Commander: Shmuel Arad XO: Igal Gamliel		Educational Base 1 Reporting to 90th Division from 8 June 1982 Dekel Battalion Gefen Battalion 931st Battalion from Nakhal
	9264th Battalion CO: Itzkhak Nudelman	From 623rd Brigade Reporting to 7th Brigade from 9 June 1982
	424th Battalion (Shaked) CO: Ofer Sariya	Reporting to 401st Brigade
	Unit 269 (Sayeret Matkal) CO: Shay Avital	Acting as mechanised infantry Also referred as 9618th Battalion
7th Armoured Brigade (Sa'ar MeGolan) CO: Eitan Koeli XO: Shalom Hoter		From 36th Division After 7 June 1982 77th Battalion to Yossi Peled Force Using tanks of 166th Brigade for engineering equipment
	82nd Battalion (Ga'ash) CO: David Mossel	Merkava Mk 1 tanks
	75th Battalion (Romach) CO: Ziv Halevi	
	719th Battalion CO: Elisha Shapiro	From 767th Brigade, 880th Division from 11 June 1982
209th Artillery Brigade (Kidon) CO: Doron Kadmiel XO: Rafi Yizhar (Res) XO: Pini Doron / Moti Tal		From 131st Division Entered Lebanon via Cheeba Farms on 9 June 1982
	404th Battalion (Shfifon) CO: Tsachi Ganor	M109, Active duty
	7032nd Battalion CO: Itzkhak Weis	M109, Reserve
	7057th Battalion CO: Nisan Levin	M109, Reserve
	439th Battalion CO: Israel Hadad	M109, Reserve

	419th Battalion CO: Adi Mikhalin	From 282nd Brigade 160mm mortar track
	9260th Battalion CO: Yossi Dagan	From 282nd Brigade M109
	412th Battalion CO: Ami Shilo	From 219th Brigade M107/M110
	8194th Battalion CO: Baruch Benbenishti	From 219th Brigade M107/M110
	5255th Artillery Observation Battalion CO: Shaul Zavida	
286th Artillery Brigade (Tzur) CO: Uzi Legerman		Deployed in July to replace elements of 219th and 282nd Brigades
	8157th Battalion CO: Micha Sneh	M107/M110
	9305th Battalion CO: Roni Yakubovich	M109
	8142nd Battalion CO: Menachem Eshel	M109
	413th Battalion CO: Tzvi Shperling	M109
Engineers	**606th Battalion (Sa'ar)** CO: Avraham Bachar	
Air Defence	**66th ADA Battalion** CO: Avi Bokek	
	946th Battalion (Drakon) CO: Menachem Akiva XO: Yossi Horovitz	M48 Chaparral SAM 2 batteries of TCM-20 Reporting to 66th Battalion
8172nd Maintenance Brigade CO: Itzkhak Eshet		
	8169th Supply Battalion	
	9233rd Medical Battalion	
	(?) Signals Battalion	
	784th Ordnance Services Battalion CO: Yoram Fuks	Also support 880th Division
Intelligence	**Unit 5853** CO: Tani Geva	

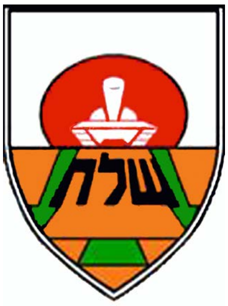
252nd Division (Sinai)



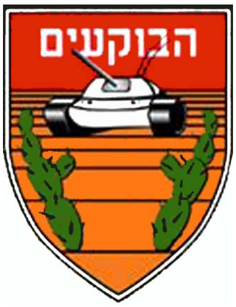
252nd Division (Sinai)



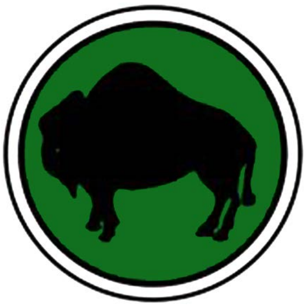
401st Armoured Brigade (Yikvot Ha-Barzel)



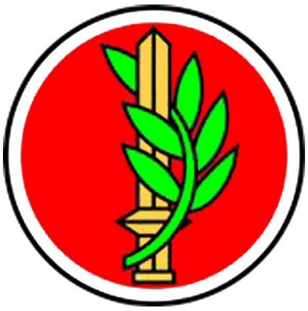
46th Battalion (Shelach)



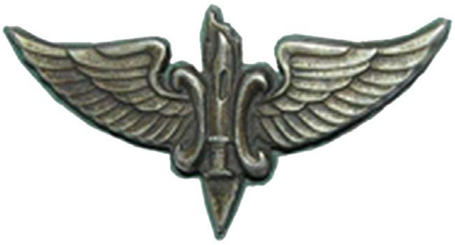
52nd Battalion (Ha-Boqim)



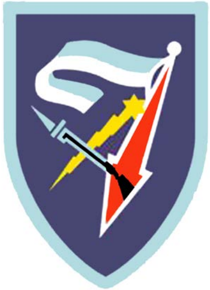
14th Armoured Brigade (Mahatz)



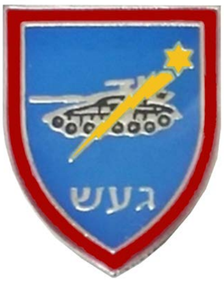
261st Brigade (School of Officers)



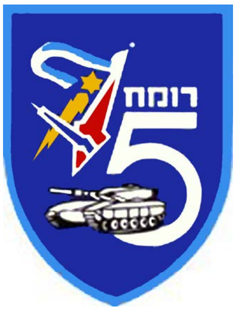
424th Battalion (Shaked)



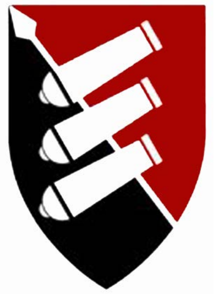
7th Armoured Brigade (Sa'ar MeGolan)



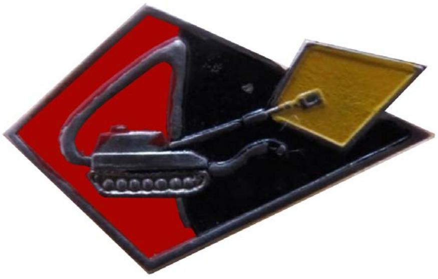
82nd Battalion (Ga'ash)



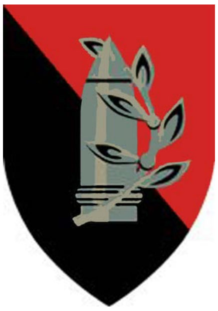
75th Battalion (Romach)



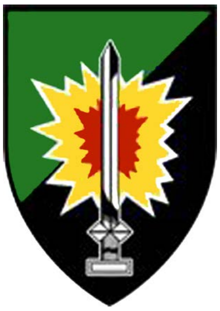
209th Artillery Brigade (Kidon)



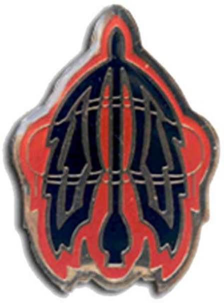
404th Battalion (Shfifon)



286th Artillery Brigade (Tzur)

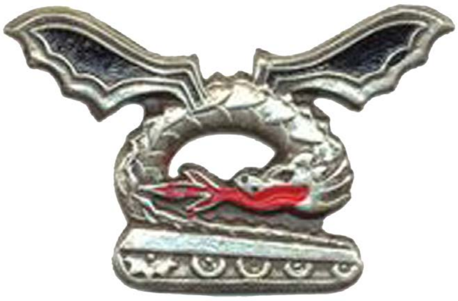


606th Battalion (Sa'ar)

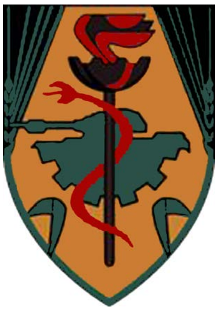


66th ADA Battalion

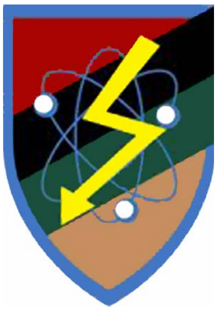
252nd Division (Sinai)



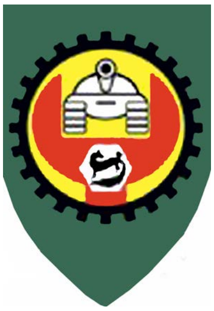
946th Battalion (Drakon)



8172nd Maintenance Brigade



Unknown Signals Battalion?



784th Ordnance Services Battalion

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'Abram' (veteran tankman, 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade, IDF), October 2020

'Adad' (retired Su-7/20/22 pilot, SyAAF), May 1996

Adir, Itsik (veteran tankman, 71st Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade, IDF), April 2022

Asher Fahn (veteran tankman, 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade, IDF), December 2021

'Barak' (veteran tankman, 429th Battalion, 211th Armoured Brigade, IDF), June 2020

'Boudros' (retired MiG-21 pilot, SyAAF), interviews, March 2007, October 2008, November 2015, February 2016, April 2018

'Duha' (retired SyAADF officer), interviews, August 2004, March 2007, July 2013, November 2015, February 2016, April 2018

'Emil' (veteran of the IDF/Air Defence Corps), July 2012

'Hashim' (retired SyAADF officer), interviews, March 2005, March 2006, July 2013, November 2016

'Hussam' (retired MiG-21 and MiG-25 pilot, SyAAF), October 2016, April 2018

'Ismael' (retired SyAAF MiG-21/Su-22/Su-24 pilot), November 2015

'Jabbar' (retired officer of the Syrian Military Intelligence), June 2003, March 2006

Koren, Jacob (veteran tankman, 275th Battalion, 847th Armoured Brigade, IDF), March 2022

Levin, Danny (veteran of Team Erez, Golani Reconnaissance Company, 1st 'Golani' Infantry Brigade), October 2021

Morag, Yossi (veteran tankman, 844th Armoured Brigade, IDF), November 2018

'Mouhannad' (MiG-21 and Su-22 pilot, SyAAF), August 2004, June 2011, July 2013, December 2016, April 2018

'Nabil' (SA-6/11/17 operator, SyAADF), April 2001, March 2007, October 2007, July 2013, November 2016

Popper, Itzik (veteran tankman, 53rd Battalion, 188th Armoured Brigade, IDF), February 2022

Saloni, Itzik (veteran engineer, 605th Engineer Battalion, IDF), April 2020

'Talal' (CO SAM brigade, SyAAF/SyAADF), April 2001, August 2004, March 2005, March 2006, March 2007, October 2007, October 2008, December 2012, July 2013, November 2015, December 2016, April 2018

Veterans of 904th Battalion, 300th Brigade, IDF, April 2022

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NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1 Unless stated otherwise, the content of this chapter is based on Volumes 1 and 2 of this mini-series; O'Ballance (1998), pp. 110–111; ICTJ, pp. 41–45; Tabitha, pp. 269–270; Brynen (1990), pp. 138–150); Rabah (2020), pp. 150–160; Choueifaty (2010), pp. 10–19; Menargues (2004), pp. 162–179; Golan (2017), pp. 87–88; Sayigh (1997), pp. 520–521), and reports in the newspaper *Davar*, from August–November 1981.

2 According to William Safire ('On Language, Izationization', *The New York Times*, 21 April 1991), Lebanoninsation is a pejorative political term standing for a country degenerating into a civil war – or a so-called 'failed state'. First used by Israeli president Shimon Peres in 1983, it is comparable to 'Balkanisation', but occurring without succession, within the borders of one country.

3 As so often before and after, this measure proved to be of only temporary nature: deliveries of F-16s to Israel resumed within weeks.

4 *Maskirovka* is a Russian term for military deception.

5 Unless stated otherwise, this and the following two sub-chapters are based on Golan, *Israel's War*, pp. 80–111; Schiff et al, pp. 39–40; Manos, *First Casualty of the War*, pp. 12–13; Mordechai Barkai, '3 Bases and 2 MiGs', *Davar* newspaper, 22 April 1982; Weiss,

'IDF Chief-of-Staff: The Ceasefire in the North is no more', *Davar* newspaper, 12 May 1982; 'IDF Chief-of-Staff: Reconnaissance Flights over Lebanon will continue', *Davar* newspaper, 26 may 1982; 'IDF Chief-of-Staff: There is a Military Solution for the problem of Terrorists', *Davar* newspaper, 31 May 1982; Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 346.

6 Killgore (2002), p. 15 & Yaqub (2016), p. 323

7 Unless stated otherwise, based on Bergman, *The Secret War*, pp. 51–60

8 Suspecting that Sadr was being held hostage, on 24 February 1982 a group of 12 of his supporters burst into Beirut International Airport and hijacked a Boeing 707 airliner belonging to Kuwait Airways with 195 crew and passengers on board. Negotiations resulted in the safe release of all the hostages, while the group surrendered to the Lebanese authorities. However, thereafter, the Kuwaiti company stopped flying to Lebanon.

9 Unless stated otherwise, this and the following sub-chapter are based on CIA, 'Syria's Elite Military Units: Key to Stability and Succession: An Intelligence Assessment', NESA 87-10012, February 1987, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room (CIA/FOIA/ERR); Konzelmann, pp. 327–335; Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, Chapter 4 & Deborah Amos, '30 Years later, Photos emerge from Killings in Syria', *npr.org*, 2 February 2012.

CHAPTER 2

1 Amir Oren, 'With Arien Sharon Gone, Israel Reveals the Truth about the 1982 Lebanon War', *Haaretz*, 17 September 2017

2 Unless stated otherwise, the rest of this chapter is entirely based on Golan, *Israel's War in Lebanon*, pp. 115–149, and official IDF documents like *Order for Operation Pines* and *Order for Operation Peace for Galilee*.

3 Based on Eli Dekel, 'Intelligence during Operation Peace for Galilee' (in Hebrew), YouTube.com, 2021; '30 Years of Operation Peace for Galilee', *Mabat-Malam* (journal of intelligence and security), Vol. 63, 2012; Yair Keidan, 'Interview with Moshe Tzurich, Northern Command Intelligence Officer during Operation Peace for Galilee', *YouTube.com*, 2021; 'Lebanon: Land of Blood, Part 2', TV documentary, *KAN Channel*, 2021.

CHAPTER 3

1 Unless stated otherwise, based on Choueifaty, *The Confrontations of Bashir, Assad, Arafat and Sharon*, pp. 20–34; Golan, pp. 86–94; Schiff et al, pp. 51–54; Yair Keidan, 'Interview with Moshe Tzurich, Northern Command Intelligence Officer during Operation Peace for Galilee' (YouTube.com video, 2021) & discussions with veterans of the 904th Battalion, 300th Brigade, IDF, April 2022.

2 Golan, *Israel's War in Lebanon*, pp. 150–215; Schiff et al, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 97–108, and *Order for Operation Peace for Galilee*, IDF, 6 June 1982.

3 Golan, *Israel's War in Lebanon*, pp. 150–215; Schiff et al, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 97–108.

4 Mandel, p. 6.

5 When working through the official Israeli military documentation, and cross-examining these with official statements, there is no avoiding the conclusion that as a result of Sharon's plot, the top brass of the IDF and Begin's cabinet had two *entirely different* ideas about the term 'Lebanese border'. The 'civilians' in Tel Aviv were thinking about the international border between Israel and Lebanon while, as explained above, the IDF considered this to be the limit between the Haddad-controlled enclave and the UNIFIL-controlled zone to the north (the so-called 'UN Border'). This – 'official Israeli line' – is insistently repeated in all the related English-language publications.

CHAPTER 4

1 Unless stated otherwise, this chapter is based on Schiff et al, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 135–137; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, pp. 509–510, 517–518, 520–521; Khaldi, *Under Siege*, pp. 85–90, and Tlass, *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon* (Hebrew edition), pp. 116–119.

CHAPTER 5

1 Mandel, p. 9.

2 Unless stated otherwise, this chapter is based on Givati, *In the Path of Desert and Fire*, pp. 440–442; Yaakov et al, *Artillery Corps in Operation Peace for Galilee*, pp. 79–98, 239–246, 257–271 and 315–328; Sakal, *Lebanon Days*, pp. 39–46; Barkai, *We're on the Road!*, pp. 90–95; Itzik Popper, interview, 02/2022; Jacob Koren, interview, 03/2022; Itzik Saloni, interview, 04/2020; Itsik Adir, interview, 04/2022; '188th Brigade in Operation Peace for Galilee', Latrun Park and Armoured Corps Museum website (yadlashiryon.com); 77th Battalion in Operation Peace for Galilee', Latrun Park and Armoured Corps Museum website; Sky High website (sky-high.co.il); Golani Heritage Association website (amuta-golani.co.il); Ben-Horin, *14th Brigade in Operation Peace for Galilee*, p. 7; Golan, *Israel's War in Lebanon*, pp. 221–232.

3 Commanded by Colonel Amos Katsir, the 828th Brigade was a training asset formed from the School of Infantry Squad Leaders and three active duty battalions, each of which usually served specific brigades (450th Paratrooper, 906th Nahal, and the 17th Golani). Its fourth element was a battalion established ad hoc from reservists with specialisations, like reconnaissance, engineers, and antitank.

4 As of June 1982, Merkava Mk 1 MBTs were not yet adapted to carry engineering equipment.

5 *Israeli Air Force Journal*, Vol. 246, June 2002.

CHAPTER 6

1 Unless stated otherwise, the rest of this chapter is based on Givati, *In the Path of Desert and Fire*, pp. 442–445; Yaakov et al, *Artillery Corps in Operation Peace for Galilee*, pp. 323-326; '450th Battalion: After Action Report', IDF; Tlas, *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon*, pp. 124–125; Abel, interview, 06/2020; Barak, interview, 06/2020; Asher Fan, interview, 12/2021.

CHAPTER 7

1 Unless stated otherwise, this chapter is based on Mike Eldar, 'Sea Bypass during Operation Peace for Galilee', *Maarachot*, Volume 299, July–August 1985 (pp. 26–34); Reuven Avi-Ran, 'Awali Landing from the Palestinian Point of View', *Maarachot*, Volume 302, April 1986 (pp. 25–29); Shaul Bronfeld, 'Awali Landings during Peace for Galilee War', *Yesodot* (Journal of the IDF History Department), Volume 3, 2021 (pp. 1–27); Mike Eldar, *Flotilla 11*, pp. 199–226; Yoram Yair, *With me from Lebanon*, pp. 29–31; Yaakov et al, *Artillery Corps in Operation Peace for Galilee*, pp. 349–368; Yossi Morag, interview, 11/2018 & Zev Elron, 'Infantry Brigade Special Units in Operation Peace for Galilee', *Yesodot*, Volume 2, 2020 (p. 89).

2 For background and details on the IDF/Sea Corps as of the early 1980s – including Flotilla 13 – see Volume 2.

3 Minor vessels of the Eilat-class were also available, but of limited use only: according to one version, each could only take one MBT and two APCs, while according to another, both were unserviceable. Eventually, neither became involved.

4 AH-1 Cobra helicopters of the IDF/AF could have provided cover for the landing force, too, but the Mission Commander refused to call them in because of the proximity of friendly troops to the enemy forces. Under the given circumstances, that was, probably, the best solution, because the sole close air support sortie flown by the air force in support of the landings resulted in two jets bombing the wrong hill.

5 Hillel Eherman and Yaakov Tsur, *Paratoopers, Large Calibre*, pp. 20–24.

CHAPTER 8

1 Unless stated otherwise, based upon Asher, *The Fighting over Beaufort during Operation Peace for Galilee*, pp. 88–110; Avigdor Kahalani, 'Fight for Beaufort', *Maarachot*, Vol. 413, July 2007, pp. 40–41; Shay Fogelman, 'Fight For Beaufort: the Order that never Arrived', *Haarets*, 31 May 2012; 'Beaufort: The Open Wound', TV Documentary; Golani Heritage Association website (amuta-golani.co.il), Levin, interview, 10/2021.

2 Achiaz was exchanged for Palestinian prisoners on 20 August 1982 (see 'Heaven is no Limit', *Israeli Air Force Journal*, Vol. 130, October 1980)

3 Major Moshe 'Kaplan' Kaplinsky was the newly appointed CO Reconnaissance Company, 1st Golani Infantry Brigade. He replaced

Major Giora 'Guni' Hernik, who was on a vacation leave and supposed to leave the IDF on 9 June but eventually joined Gabi Ashkenazi's force.

4 For his actions during the assault on Beaufort, Lieutenant Moti Goldman was awarded the Medal of Courage. Guni Hernik was posthumously awarded the Division Commander Commendation Medal.

CHAPTER 9

1 Unless stated otherwise, this chapter is based on Eshkol, *My Way*, pp. 284–288; Asher Fahn, interview, 12/2021; Abram, interview, 10/2020; After Action Report, 450th Battalion, IDF; Givati, *In the Path of Desert and Fire*, pp. 446–447; Ya'acov et al, *Artillery Corps in Operation Peace for Galilee*, pp. 271–274, 330; Aldon Kadish, 'Taking over Tyre in Operation Peace for Galilee', *Yesodot*, Vol. 2, 2020 (pp. 75–82); Golani Heritage Association website (amuta-golani.co.il); Ben-Artzi, *From 22nd to 7003rd Battalion*, pp. 7–9; Zeev Elron, 'Infantry Brigades Special Units in Operation Peace for Galilee', *Yesodot*, Vol.2, 2020, p. 102; Barkai, *We're on the Road!*, pp. 97–116; Bichman, '460th Brigade in Operation Peace for Galilee', Tactical Command College, IDF, 2014; Sakal, *Lebanon Days*, pp. 42–46, and Golan, *Israel's War in Lebanon*, pp. 267–272.

2 All the units in question were reduced in strength, with most battalions comprising only two companies. For example, the 7003rd Battalion (CO Elisha Yalin), had only one infantry company, one fire support company equipped with mortars, two tank companies of the 275th Battalion, and one antitank platoon equipped with M47 Dragon ATGMs. Later on, the unit was reinforced by an infantry company from the 9216th Battalion (CO Gali Hoss).

3 During this march, on the evening of 7 June, one of the M107s of the 334th Battalion fell off a narrow road, flipped over and killed three of its crewmembers.

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